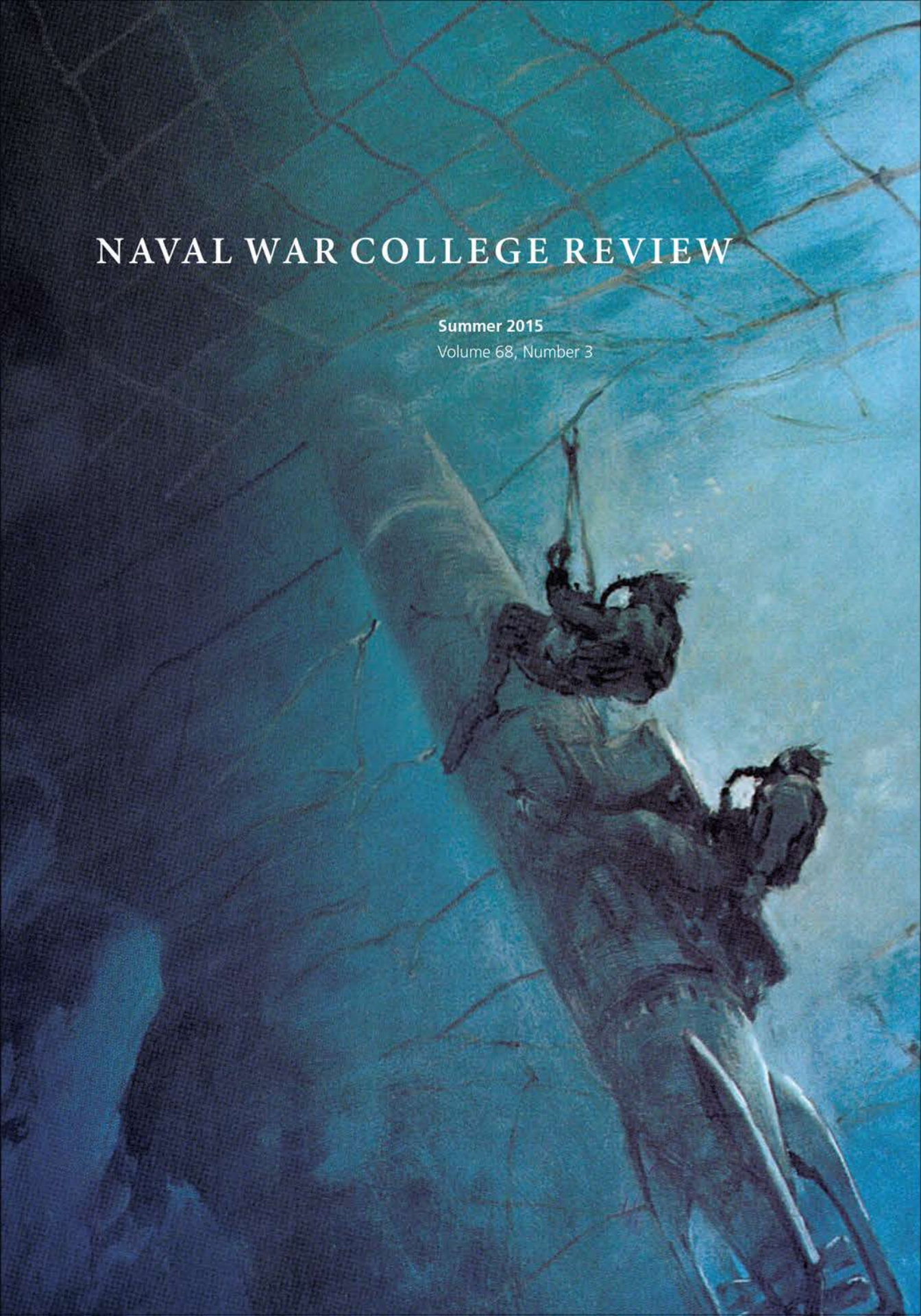


# NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

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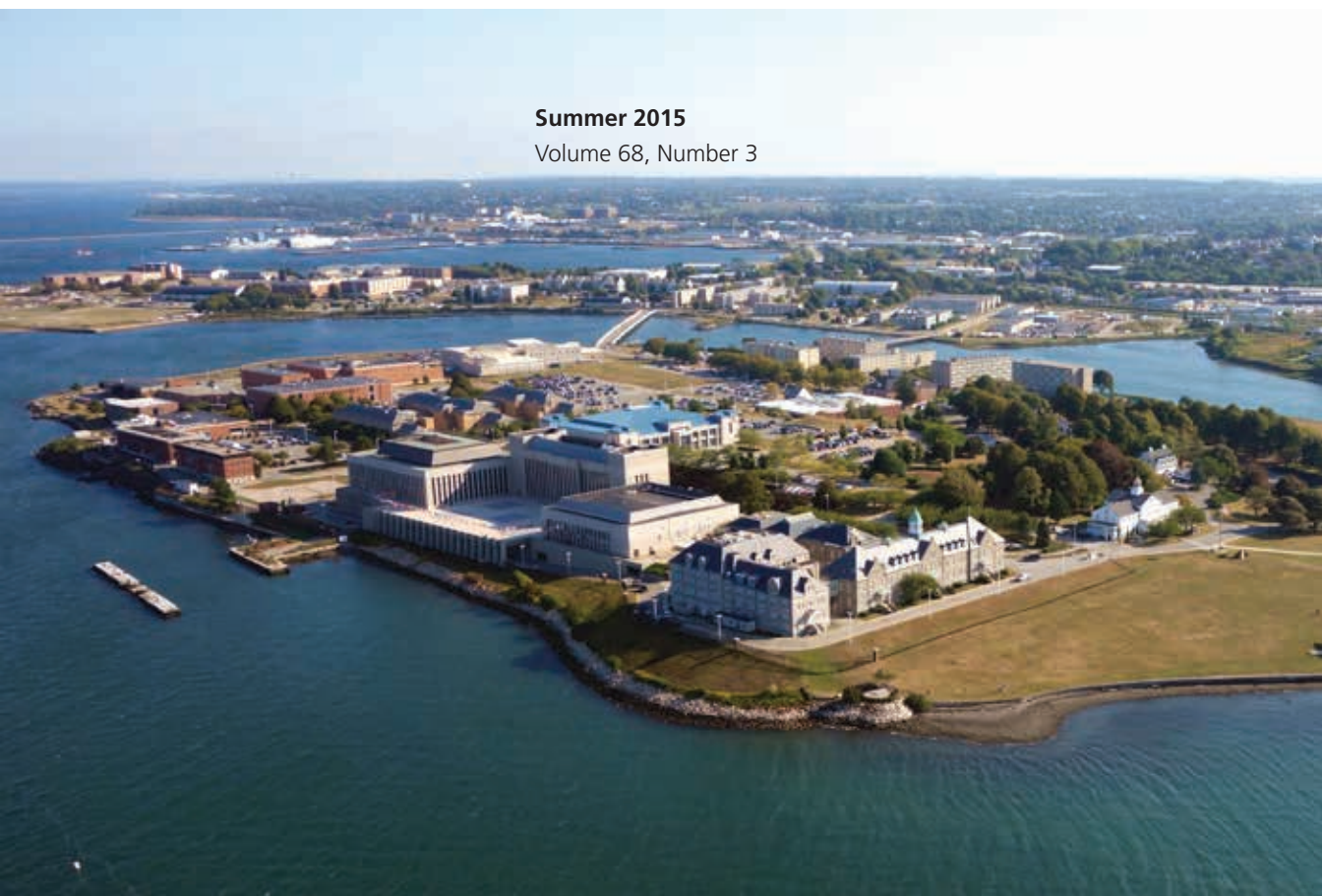
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*Editor, Circulation, or Business*  
401.841.2236  
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## FROM THE EDITORS

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In our lead article, “Fighting the Naval Hegemon: Evolution in French, Soviet, and Chinese Naval Thought,” Martin N. Murphy and Toshi Yoshihara explore a strand of naval thought in modern times that tends to be neglected by those whose outlooks have been shaped primarily by the Anglo-American school most famously exemplified by Alfred Thayer Mahan at the turn of the twentieth century. The so-called *Jeune École* (“Young School”) emerged in the 1870s in France as a novel approach to dealing with the French navy’s long-standing inferiority to its principal rival, the British Royal Navy. The central claim of this school was that a weaker naval power could pose (as we say now) an “asymmetric” threat to a stronger power through reliance on a large number of inexpensive small craft armed with the recently invented torpedo instead of on a small fleet of expensive capital ships. Somewhat later, the submarine would join the torpedo boat as the weapon of choice for a weaker naval power, a weapon directed primarily against the enemy’s commerce rather than its navy. In both world wars of the last century, of course, Germany’s employment of the submarine arm provided a powerful demonstration of the merits of such a strategy.

Less familiar is the way the legacy of the *Jeune École* shaped the naval thought and practice of the Soviet Union and, more recently, of the People’s Republic of China. The authors argue that China is currently at a “crossroads,” as its navy is poised to transition from a defensive, littorally focused force to one capable of operating in blue water and around the globe. While China’s eventual course remains unclear, they argue, Chinese thinking about maritime strategy will continue to be influenced strongly by a naval heritage that privileges methods of asymmetric and guerrilla-style warfare. Martin Murphy is a research fellow at the Centre for Maritime Policy Studies, Dalhousie University; Toshi Yoshihara is the John A. van Beuren Chair of Asia-Pacific Studies at the Naval War College.

It is hardly an exaggeration to say that nothing is as important in assessing the future strategic environment facing the United States as the intentions of China’s current leadership. Sukjoon Yoon, in “Implications of Xi Jinping’s ‘True Maritime Power’: Its Context, Significance, and Impact on the Region,” makes a compelling case that China’s maritime aspirations and behavior increasingly reflect a coherent grand or national strategy for which its current supreme leader bears much

personal responsibility. That strategy consciously combines “hard” and “soft” elements in a way that advances a long-term agenda of Chinese regional maritime dominance (in effect, a Chinese “Monroe Doctrine”) yet does not provoke an armed clash with its neighbors or the United States. Particularly important in this connection are high-level organizational changes evidently intended to enhance coordination among Chinese military and civilian agencies and thereby to enable an (American-style) “crisis management” approach to consolidating the nation’s position and claims in the East and South China Seas. Sukjoon Yoon, a former captain in the Republic of Korea Navy, is a research fellow at the Korea Institute of Maritime Strategy in Seoul.

The regional ambitions of the People’s Republic make it all the more necessary for the United States to sustain and strengthen its long-standing security collaboration with Japan. In “The JMSDF’s Resilient Power for Civil Society: Lessons from the Great East Japan Earthquake,” Captain Takuya Shimodaira provides an eyewitness account of the massive humanitarian relief operation undertaken by the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force together with elements of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps in the wake of the devastating earthquake and tsunami that struck Japan in March 2011. He argues that the JMSDF should welcome a larger role in such operations in the future. Captain Shimodaira is currently an International Fellow at the Naval War College.

As the Navy continues its service-wide effort to rethink the way it develops leaders, it has become clear that the widest gap between reality and norms continues to be in the area of so-called personal development. In “Mentoring in the U.S. Navy: Experiences and Attitudes of Senior Navy Personnel,” W. Brad Johnson and Gene R. Andersen revisit one of the key tools of personal development. With the aid of a carefully crafted opinion survey of both officer and senior enlisted personnel at the Naval War College, the authors make the case for the value of mentoring for developing Navy leaders, while cautioning against the temptation to formalize mentoring relationships or to make them mandatory. Brad Johnson is professor of psychology at the U.S. Naval Academy; Gene Andersen, a retired naval aviator, is professor of leadership education at the Naval War College.

Two historical articles round out this issue. In “‘The Navy’s Success Speaks for Itself’? The German Navy’s Independent Energy Security Strategy, 1932–1940,” Anand Toprani of the Naval War College faculty explores a little-known but remarkable chapter in Nazi Germany’s run-up to World War II. This history provides a salutary reminder of the strategic salience of military logistics requirements. The striking painting on our cover accompanies the final piece, “Frogmen against a Fleet: The Italian Attack on Alexandria 18/19 December 1941,” by

Vincent P. O'Hara and Enrico Cernuschi, a fascinating case study in asymmetric warfare at sea.

#### IF YOU VISIT US

Our editorial offices are now located in Sims Hall, in the Naval War College Coasters Harbor Island complex, on the third floor, west wing (rooms W334, 335, 309). For building-security reasons, it would be necessary to meet you at the main entrance and escort you to our suite—give us a call ahead of time (401-841-2236).





*Rear Admiral Howe became the fifty-fifth President of the U.S. Naval War College on 8 July 2014. He is a native of Jacksonville, Florida and was commissioned in 1984 following his graduation from the U.S. Naval Academy.*

*Howe's operational assignments have included a full range of duties in the Naval Special Warfare and joint Special Operations communities. He commanded Naval Special Warfare Unit 3 in Bahrain, Naval Special Warfare Group 3 in San Diego, and Special Operations Command, Pacific in Hawaii. His service overseas includes multiple deployments to the western Pacific and Southwest Asia and participation in Operations EARNEST WILL, PROVIDE PROMISE, ENDURING FREEDOM, and IRAQI FREEDOM.*

*His key joint and staff assignments include current operations officer at Special Operations Command, Pacific; Chief Staff Officer, Naval Special Warfare Development Group; Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations, Plans and Policy at Naval Special Warfare Command; Director of Legislative Affairs for U.S. Special Operations Command; and Assistant Commanding Officer, Joint Special Operations Command.*

*Howe graduated from the Naval Postgraduate School in 1995 with a master of arts in national security affairs (special operations / low-intensity conflict), and from the National War College in 2002 with a master of arts in national security.*

## PRESIDENT'S FORUM

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### *Education Engine*

CONSIDER SOME RECENT HEADLINES: “The Navy of the Future Wants to Use Lasers and Superfast Electromagnetic Railguns Instead of Shells and Gunpowder” (Aspen Institute, *Five Best Ideas of the Day*, 10 February 2015, [aspen.us/](http://aspen.us/)); “Massive Computing Power and Better Tools Are Making It Harder to Hide Submarines” (ibid., 19 February 2015); and “ISIS Ranks Grow as Fast as U.S. Bombs Can Wipe Them Out” (*Daily Beast*, 3 February 2015, [www.thedailybeast.com/](http://www.thedailybeast.com/)). Now imagine what headlines might read in the year 2025. What will technology bring to the battlefield? What will the enemy look like? On how many dimensions will we have to fight? A recent CNN article claiming that “everything you know about the ‘future of war’ is wrong” (23 February 2015, [www.cnn.com/](http://www.cnn.com/)) suggests there is no way to know.

At the Naval War College, we believe you train for the known and educate for the unknown. Thus, we prepare our graduates for the unknown and the complex with an intensive core educational program that fosters new habits of mind and cultivates the ability to reason critically. The core is the “engine” of the Naval War College, fueled by three dynamic departments and their world-class faculties of officers, professional academics, and practitioners.

The College is unique in that the same faculty teaches two distinct accredited graduate degrees. Intermediate Level Course (ILC) students earn MAs in Defense and Strategic Studies through the Raymond A. Spruance program, and Senior Level Course (SLC) students earn MAs in National Security and Strategic Studies via the Chester W. Nimitz program. The two programs provide Joint Professional Military Education phases I and II certification, respectively, and both integrate U.S. and foreign officers and interagency civilians. The core curriculum of each program is expertly delivered by the three departments.

The Joint Military Operations Department investigates the theory and practice of operational art and design across the range of military operations and familiarizes students with the Joint Operation Planning Process and the Navy Planning Process. Students tackle unstructured, complex problems such as disaster relief after tsunamis and earthquakes, military responses to failed critical states, and conflict with peer competitors. The department prepares students to lead operational planning teams at the combatant-commander and joint-task-force levels while also developing the joint attitudes and perspectives essential to modern war.

The National Security Affairs Department offers an interdisciplinary approach to security studies, an approach in which students wrestle with the dynamic challenges facing modern leaders and institutions. ILC students focus on the theater-strategic challenges concerning combatant commands, while SLC students engage with global and national strategic-level issues. All students gain invaluable perspective on the complexities of the interagency and decision-making environment through three parallel subcourses: Security Strategies, Policy Analysis, and Leadership Concepts. I recently attended the final exercises and was highly impressed with how our students presented their original ideas and analyses to panels of distinguished experts from combatant commands and Washington—not to mention to their peers from across the services and the interagency realm.

The Strategy and Policy Department educates strategically minded leaders skilled at critical analysis in today's complex security environment. This course challenges students to master a wide range of classical and contemporary strategic concepts and includes various landmark thinkers on strategy and war—among others, Sun Tzu, Thucydides, Clausewitz, and Mao. Students also absorb classic works of sea power and assess modern concepts in the laboratory of history via numerous case studies. With intensive reading and writing requirements in a small-seminar environment, students develop their own original and cogent analyses of strategic decisions. The intermediate- and senior-level courses on strategy are considered the very best of their kind and serve as models for programs at major universities, such as Yale.

The engine of the core curriculum is “supercharged” by an Electives Program accounting for 20 percent of each student's academic experience. Students select from over a hundred course topics, such as modern China, cyber security, Winston Churchill, the literature of war, and other subjects capitalizing on the faculty's diverse expertise. Students may also pursue group advanced research projects, including the Halsey Alfa and Bravo courses, which focus on tactical and operational war-gaming scenarios important to the fleet. Two special programs extend the College program from ten to thirteen months for some students: the

recently expanded Maritime Advanced Warfighting School, which creates operational planners now in high demand in the fleet, and the new Advanced Studies in Naval Strategy program, which offers a deep dive into critical principles of strategy. All of these elements combine with the core curriculum to develop the most important weapon system of all—the mind.

Our great gift to students is a new life of the mind. I receive direct and clear evidence from our graduates, such as this comment from a recent survey: “[The Naval War College] provided me with historical context and critical thinking skills that have benefited me every day of my current assignment as senior advisor to a combatant commander.” Other graduates have reported, “For the first time I find that I have had major shifts in my thinking,” and “I am now looking at what is happening in the world through a different lens.” None of this happens without a world-class faculty, one capable of transforming the minds—and thus the lives—of the men and women who will chart our course into the future.

Since taking command last year, I have been particularly impressed with the dedication and impact of our faculty. They commit long hours to students while constantly revising and seamlessly orchestrating the fundamentally different ILC and SLC curricula. Our active-duty professors come from all services and from operational and joint assignments and thus offer compelling relevance. Our civilian professors provide the deep expertise and continuity essential to program development, and they make themselves extraordinarily relevant in their respective fields. Just within the past few months, for example, Naval War College professors have published books with such major academic presses as the Oxford University Press and Stanford University Press, as well as articles in key journals like *Joint Force Quarterly* and *International Theory*. They also enjoy direct connections to senior leaders, including in-person briefings for the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Chief of Naval Operations on matters involving Asian security strategy. Yet their first love is, and must be, teaching and challenging our students.

Admiral James G. Stavridis has often observed that twenty-first-century warfare is “brain on brain.” He’s right. Well-educated leaders are the lone constant we can create for an unknown future, and the Naval War College’s “engine”—our core program fueled by outstanding faculty—is doing just that.

P. GARDNER HOWE III

*Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy  
President, Naval War College*



*Dr. Murphy is a Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for Foreign Policy Studies, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, as well as a Visiting Fellow at the Corbett Centre for Maritime Policy Studies at King's College London. He was previously a Senior Research Fellow at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments. He has published three books on piracy and unconventional warfare at sea, a monograph on the Littoral Combat Ship, and some fifty articles and book chapters.*

*Professor Yoshihara, of the Strategy and Policy faculty at the Naval War College, holds the John A. van Beuren Chair of Asia-Pacific Studies and is an affiliate member of the China Maritime Studies Institute at the College. Most recently, he is coauthor of Red Star over the Pacific: China's Rise and the Challenge to U.S. Maritime Strategy (2010) and coeditor of Strategy in the Second Nuclear Age: Power, Ambition, and the Ultimate Weapon (2012).*

# FIGHTING THE NAVAL HEGEMON

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## Evolution in French, Soviet, and Chinese Naval Thought

*Martin N. Murphy and Toshi Yoshihara*

**G**eography gives strategy its context. Secure from land invasion, Great Britain and later the United States employed a distinctive form of sea power to defeat their adversaries. Both used their navies to control sea-lanes and vital choke points and to apply direct pressure along enemy coastlines. Through their dominance of the oceans they were able to shape the political and economic order of the world. It is fair to say that what amounts to the Anglo-American school of naval power has demonstrated its efficacy time after time: over the past 250 years these two powers have, singly or together, and always with other allies, defeated every opponent that has attempted to change that order.

An alternative school of naval thought, one rooted in coastal defense, follows an asymmetric path intended to enable the weak to take down the strong. This approach to naval warfare has always sought to capitalize on leading-edge technology while drawing inspiration from French tactics of *guerre de course* (with their origins in piracy and privateering), the Russian Revolution, and “people’s war” in China. In contrast to the oceanic outlook of the Anglo-American tradition, this approach focuses on operations in the littorals and command of the sea in those waters alone. It yokes the operational and tactical offense to the strategic defense. It eschews fleet-on-fleet engagement and refuses frontal battle. Instead it seeks to wear down the opponent while channeling enemy forces as they approach the shoreline, forcing them to attack coastal and inland positions from unfamiliar seas. The aim is to make the intruder vulnerable to a counterattack that shifts the initiative to the defender. It extracts advantage from geography. For instance, China’s control over Asian waters and major shipping lanes would give Beijing substantial global leverage.

For over a century, this tradition of naval thought has evolved through various iterations in France, the Soviet Union, and the People's Republic of China, while retaining its essential features. However, the unique geopolitical contexts, cultural attitudes, and economic circumstances produced variation in how these three states employed sea power. This alternative approach to naval warfare began life in late-nineteenth-century France, where, known as the *Jeune École*, it arose as a counter to British naval strategy. It reemerged in the Soviet Union during the 1920s, when the revolutionary government felt especially vulnerable to foreign intervention and was in no position to build a battle fleet. There it mutated on contact with revolutionary war experience, becoming known as the "Young School" and emerging as an alternative to Alfred Thayer Mahan's "command of the sea" theory. From there it was transmitted to the People's Republic, where several of its attributes have persisted in Chinese naval doctrine.

Breaking from the past, however, China today can compete economically with the United States, the leading maritime power, even as it holds on to its preference for waging asymmetric warfare at sea. By contrast, neither France nor the Soviet Union possessed the wherewithal to challenge seriously the economic position of the naval hegemons of their respective eras. The prospect in China of alignment of economic prowess with unorthodox ideas about naval combat is a potentially new phenomenon worthy of close attention by the United States. While China is at the forefront of this alternative school in the twenty-first century, its ideas also animate the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy and exert a strong influence on the Russian navy. Notably, Tehran, Moscow, and Beijing are ambivalent about, if not hostile to, American primacy at sea, and their navies have begun to cooperate with each other.<sup>1</sup> It is thus very likely that this alternative tradition will live on and be felt across the littorals of Eurasia in the coming years, posing multiple, yet varied, challenges to U.S. naval predominance.

The Soviet Young School and Mao's "people's war" virtually simultaneously shaped the early development of the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN). While the two theories clearly overlapped, however, they represented separate sources of influence on Chinese naval strategy and tactics.<sup>2</sup> In both France and the Soviet Union, doctrines that stressed the importance of the battle fleet eventually enveloped this alternative naval school of thought. In China, this tradition remains energetic and influential alongside the growth of a more conventional naval force. Whether such coexistence will continue remains unclear. Indeed, Chinese strategists have debated the future course of naval doctrine for decades. In an earlier manifestation of this discourse, one group argued that "people's war" theory was irrelevant at sea against technologically sophisticated enemies such as the United States and Japan. Another view, while agreeing that the Chinese navy should no longer serve exclusively as the guardian of the army's coastal flank,

insisted that people's war at sea simply needed to be adapted to "new historical" conditions.<sup>3</sup>

A similar debate now surrounds the PLAN's recent ascent at sea and its future implications. Will the naval service follow the Anglo-American model of sea power and develop a globe-straddling blue-water navy capable of waging transoceanic campaigns? Or will the PLAN focus on homeland defense, staying true to its longstanding core identity, even as it becomes more modern, lethal, and expeditionary? Or will the Chinese navy chart a unique path that reflects the imperatives peculiar to Beijing's evolving circumstances? As the PLAN's growth continues to tilt the naval balance of power, these questions are gaining policy urgency in Washington and across Asian capitals. The PLAN's current naval strategy, which enlarges China's maritime defense perimeter farther out to open waters, is an outgrowth of rather than a break with its formative period, when the ideas of the alternative school took root. Consequently, the United States and other seafaring regional powers must remain attentive to the continuing vibrancy of this tradition in China and its implications for littoral warfare in Asia.

#### THE *JEUNE ÉCOLE*: HOW THE WEAK CAN DEFEAT THE STRONG

The *Jeune École* went through two evolutions. The first laid its primary emphasis on commerce war, linked secondarily to coastal defense; the second merged these priorities. Both evolutions stressed the importance of technology, the use of ship speed and numbers, and the redundancy of large battle fleets. Both were responses to constrained naval budgets.

The theory as a whole is associated indelibly with Vice Admiral Hyacinthe-Laurent-Théophile Aube, who first articulated the school's basic ideas in the 1870s before serving as France's minister of marine 1886–87.<sup>4</sup> Aube was a man of the colonies. When he returned to France in 1881 he brought with him the adventurous colonial spirit and sided with a group of young, reform-minded officers who favored his ideas. These were the *Jeune École*—the Young School. The traditionalists who opposed them became known eventually as the "French School." Once Alfred Thayer Mahan in the United States began to publish, they worked to adapt his thinking to France's position as a secondary naval power.

Aube became the intellectual driving force behind the *Jeune École*, along with a young journalist, Gabriel Charmes, with whom he worked closely until Charmes's death early in Aube's term as minister. However, its basic features had been delineated in the late 1860s by Captain Richild Grivel, who suggested that France, as the inferior power with respect to Britain, should pursue commerce war (*guerre de course*) and use its battle fleet (in *guerre d'escadre*) only against enemies inferior to itself.<sup>5</sup>

Military power derives directly from economic power. France's economy during the years running up to World War I was not weak, but it was never as strong as that of Great Britain or, eventually, Germany. France's navy, consequently, always struggled to match those of its principal rivals, a situation that worsened in the period between Grivel and Aube. In 1870–71 France lost the Franco-Prussian War. The army of the newly created German Empire became France's principal enemy and France's army the recipient of the bulk of French state defense

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*From its first days, an alternative school of thought has emphasized innovation, new operational methods, deception, camouflage, joint operations, assaults on rear areas and communications, and guerilla methods.*

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expenditure. Consequently, the French navy had to find another way to compete at sea with Britain and, eventually, Germany; the result was a vigorous and, some have argued, destructive and politicized de-

bate.<sup>6</sup> Aube's position was that while the naval high command might argue for a traditional, battleship-heavy navy to meet Britain on the best affordable terms, such fleet-on-fleet engagements were now rare and posed much greater risk to the inferior power than to the superior. He argued that the weaker side must search out alternative tactics, exploit new technology, and decline to engage the superior enemy until it became no longer numerically inferior.

Strategies for dealing with a superior naval power have traditionally fallen into two categories. One involves "risk fleets," otherwise known as "fleets in being," forces structured similarly to the superior power's but smaller. In the modern age, the Imperial German Navy assembled by Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz is the classic example. The second comprises "coastal-defense fleets," bringing together land-based capabilities, such as forts and artillery, with minefields, patrol boats, and submarines, as assembled in various periods by France, the Soviet Union, and China. The *Jeune École* supported coastal-defense measures but never argued for a risk fleet, which would aim eventually to confront the opponent's main battle fleet, if and when a favorable opportunity occurred.

Instead, the *Jeune École* took aim at the enemy's economic power and social stability, seeing trade as Britain's greatest strategic weakness.<sup>7</sup> British naval exercises suggested that this assessment was right—the nation's trade had increased massively since the Napoleonic Wars and was now heavily dependent on imports, while the Royal Navy's traditional policy of close blockade had been rendered untenable by the advent of steam power and the threat to the fleet posed by small, fast-moving torpedo boats.<sup>8</sup> Charmes argued that commerce campaigns should be pursued without pity; it was a tenet of the *Jeune École* that international law had no place in modern war. Despite the ruthlessness of its means, however, the *Jeune École*'s primary aim was to induce not starvation but economic panic,

leading to financial and social upheaval.<sup>9</sup> Interestingly, the French navy was never to pursue the *Jeune École*'s recommendations, but during World War I the Imperial German Navy would, in addition to its risk-fleet strategy. There were strategic differences but operational similarities between what the *Jeune École* recommended and the Germans later implemented, and the latter's experience confirmed many of the *Jeune École*'s views.<sup>10</sup>

### *Alternative Tactics, New Technologies, and Numerical Superiority*

The *Jeune École*'s first evolution ended when Aube left office in 1887, at which time the school's influence went into temporary decline. The second evolution began in the 1890s, when his ideas were taken up by a new generation of young naval officers. Underlying both evolutions was the need to deliver naval effect with limited budgets. If commerce war and coastal defense—with the emphasis on commerce war—were the *Jeune École*'s alternatives during the first phase, its alternative technological focus was on the self-propelled torpedo, married to specialized torpedo boats. The *Jeune École* argued consistently that numbers matter and that therefore it was better to build larger numbers of smaller ships than to rely on a smaller number of battleships and cruisers—better to replace armor and large guns with speed and numerical superiority.<sup>11</sup> It was this view that led to adoption of the torpedo, because, though in Aube's time it was still in its technological infancy, it could be launched from fast-moving small craft.<sup>12</sup> Small meant cheap, which translated into large numbers.<sup>13</sup> Camouflage and deception too were always vital components of the *Jeune École*'s methods. There was nothing more demoralizing for a battle fleet, Charmes suggested, than to be attacked by small, mixed flotillas of gunboats and torpedo boats flitting like “phantoms” amidst the confusion of battle.<sup>14</sup>

Critically, numerical superiority would not be achieved by a single force operating from a single base. The total force would be distributed in flotilla-sized packets across multiple, fortified bases coming together only long enough to hit a target before scattering again to elude counterattack. Aube broke from accepted wisdom when he argued that small boats could be used offensively. An exercise conducted while he was minister of marine showed that his confidence was largely justified.<sup>15</sup> Despite their limitations, small craft were demonstrably capable of slipping past any blockade to attack shipping; consequently, commerce war in “narrow seas” was a viable option.<sup>16</sup>

The tactical emphasis during the *Jeune École*'s second stage switched to coastal defense. The torpedo was maturing as a weapon to a degree that the focus by the 1890s was on small, fast torpedo boats operating in and from the littorals.<sup>17</sup> However, this did not mean commerce war was abandoned. The theory now was that rather than attempting to dislocate British trade on the high seas, France could



exploit its geographic position (including its position in the Mediterranean) so as to fuse commerce war and coastal defense into a single, littoral-war concept.<sup>18</sup> Ship numbers still mattered most, and speed remained important. Aube's idea of ship specialization was retained; the intention was to equip each flotilla with a single ship type designated for a single mission.<sup>19</sup>

### *Jeune École: Its Effect and Its Legacy*

As the nineteenth century merged into the twentieth, plans that were inspired by *Jeune École* theories but at the same time retained cruisers and much of the traditional battle fleet, thereby once again making distant *guerre de course* possible, were put forward. They were argued by two senior advocates: Admiral François-Ernest Fournier, head of the newly established Naval War College, and, later, Jean-Louis de Lanessan, the minister of marine from 1899 to 1902. Both called for the French navy to be based in multiple locations to force the British to divide their blockading forces. Torpedo boats and submarines would harry isolated British units, pushing them farther out to sea. French battleships and cruisers would then be able to evade the now-fragmented blockade line and hunt down British trade in distant waters.

In the end, however, time caught up with both the *Jeune École* and the conglomerate strategy of Lanessan. In 1904, Britain and France signed the Entente Cordiale.<sup>20</sup> The effect on relations was not immediate, but the two countries were put on a path that eventually made them allies against Germany, thus removing the political and strategic context that had given the *Jeune École* its rationale. Technical developments elsewhere also lessened the torpedo threat, including the advent of wireless, steel armor, quick-firing artillery, searchlights, and torpedo nets. In Britain, there was now a naval revival, including the building of torpedo boat *destroyers*, specifically to defend the fleet; French morale was undermined by its success, compared with France's own poorly conceived building program. Also in France, Aube's dismissive attitude to international law and public opinion was questioned, while the type of fleet the *Jeune École* concept demanded was rejected as too specialized for orthodox conceptions of naval strategy.<sup>21</sup>

The *Jeune École* has been maligned by naval practitioners and historians—often for partisan reasons—even though it changed contemporary strategy and tactics, affected the development of new technologies, and left a tactical legacy that remains influential today.<sup>22</sup> Admiral Raoul Castex, the early-twentieth-century French strategic theoretician, was caustic about the school's ideas and what he regarded as the confusion they spread, yet he agreed that its emphasis on speed, specialization, and numbers was not misplaced.<sup>23</sup> The distinguished American historian Theodore Ropp, who also regarded the *Jeune École* unfavorably, conceded that its ideas represented a genuinely new school of naval warfare.<sup>24</sup> Technologically, it influenced the development of the torpedo, the

submarine, the offensive employment of small craft, and the integration of land- and sea-based coastal-defense forces. Tactically, it affected coastal warfare, commerce warfare, the exploitation of modern communications to effect the dispersal and rapid concentration of force, and the evolution toward what was known in France as *guerre industrielle* and elsewhere as “total war.”

It had perhaps its greatest impact outside France, first and most obviously in Germany’s unrestricted submarine warfare campaigns of World Wars I and II. But it was the British who, once they recognized that their trade was vulnerable and their traditional blockade strategy unworkable, became, in the words of naval historian Geoffrey Till, “more worried about these ideas than they cared to admit.”<sup>25</sup>

### FISHER AND FLOTILLA WARFARE

Admiral of the Fleet Sir John “Jackie” Fisher, First Sea Lord 1904–10 and 1914–15, thought much as Aube had. While his name is linked irrevocably with the “dreadnought” capital ship revolution, he argued with all his renowned vigor that the Royal Navy should rely on torpedo-equipped flotillas in home waters and fast battle cruisers to protect the imperial shipping lanes, rather than on the battle fleet as the main instrument of strategic deterrence.<sup>26</sup> Fisher’s view in 1905 was that if torpedo boats were available in sufficient numbers they could make the English Channel and the western Mediterranean basin impenetrable to warships within three or four years.<sup>27</sup> Like Aube’s, Fisher’s conception depended on mass, not individual superiority.<sup>28</sup> His vision was one of sea denial, which aims to prevent an opponent from using maritime space as it chooses.<sup>29</sup> The historian Nicholas Lambert suggests it was “a completely new way of thinking.”<sup>30</sup>

Sea denial has often been castigated as a strategy of negativity, but in Fisher’s view it was the opposite. What made the concept so attractive to him was that he could deploy large numbers of relatively cheap surface combatants in “flotillas” to patrol the English Channel, the approach to the British Isles that concerned him the most. Although access to this strip of water could be effectively denied to both sides, as the French would act against British capital ships in the same way, this flotilla-based defense would be to Britain’s advantage, because while the capital ships and small combatants of both navies were busy holding or denying the English Channel, the Royal Navy could deploy its armored cruisers much more productively in defense of imperial possessions and trade routes overseas.<sup>31</sup> Far from being tied down, they would be liberated to fulfill their most important role. By the end of 1905 the Royal Navy’s Director of Naval Intelligence, Captain Charles Ottley, was writing of employing “flotilla defense” from Brest in the west to the mouth of the Elbe in the east, thereby also restricting the German navy, which operated from bases in and around Wilhelmshaven.<sup>32</sup>

Any suspicion that flotilla defense was for Fisher some sort of sideshow is dispelled by his own writings. He wrote that it was a strategy “*peculiarly adapted*” to the defense of the narrow seas and that in terms of his own preparations, “some vessels, such, for instance, as torpedo craft and submarines, are wanted sooner than others,” because they constituted “the advanced guard and first striking force of the whole fleet.”<sup>33</sup> It was the submarine that Fisher lauded above all. In Fisher’s view the submarine represented a true “revolution” in naval warfare.<sup>34</sup>

Many of Fisher’s predictions about the submarine’s effectiveness and the threats presented by torpedoes were borne out. The battle of Jutland in 1916 confirmed what had been plain since 1914—that the High Seas Fleet, Germany’s “risk fleet,” was strategically irrelevant unless it was able to sink an isolated element of the Royal Navy’s Grand Fleet of sufficient size to erode the latter’s overall numerical superiority. The only way the German navy could influence the outcome of the war was to use long-range submarines, not cruisers, to sink British commerce. The commerce-war strategy that the *Jeune École* had advanced forty years earlier was now brought to fruition, albeit at a technologically more advanced level.<sup>35</sup>

### THE SOVIET “YOUNG SCHOOL”

Like the *Jeune École*, the Soviet “Young School” (*molodaia shkola*) was driven by the need to maintain a naval capability and capacity in an era of constrained resources; in the Soviet case, naval budgets were restricted and shipbuilding capability had been crippled by civil war. In France, state resources had been directed to the army. In the Soviet Union, the overwhelming priority during the interwar years was rapid industrialization, and the army was allocated most of what was left. The naval focus accordingly switched to coastal defense, “using an integrated system of minefields, coastal artillery, submarines and motor torpedo boats,” with the aim of conducting its war at sea “on lines quite novel in maritime strategy.”<sup>36</sup> Traditionalists were vilified as utterly out of touch.<sup>37</sup>

Unlike the *Jeune École*, however, it was also driven by ideology: its advocates, although influenced strongly by the Red Army, clearly worked under Communist Party direction.<sup>38</sup> The intention was to provide a theoretical underpinning for a light and inexpensive naval defensive-deterrent force centered on submarines and with only a small number of large ships retained to support them.<sup>39</sup> Stripped of its Marxist-Leninist terminology, the central tenets of what became known (because of its conscious use of ideas drawn from the *Jeune École*) as the Soviet Young School were that the navy existed to guard the army’s seaward flank, that it should be refocused on “small war,” that smaller craft and submarines could be manufactured quickly and losses could therefore be readily replaced, and that the submarine had replaced the battleship as the main striking arm of the fleet.<sup>40</sup>

The drive for a proletarian military doctrine that aimed to bring together all the arms of state power had begun after the Russian civil war ended in 1921.<sup>41</sup> Despite this political orientation, many members of the old tsarist navy retained their positions because of their technical and operational experience. They continued to argue that the ability to exert command of the sea as described by Mahan was essential for defending the nation's sea approaches and forcing the straits that confined Soviet naval power. Their opponents branded them the "Old School."<sup>42</sup> Few in the party understood what these men were talking about; most thought they were unrealistic, given the Soviet Union's parlous financial state.

Admiral Sergey Gorshkov, who was to be the commander in chief of the Soviet navy from 1956 to 1985, summed up in 1972–73 the changes that took place in the 1920s in terms that could have described an updated version of the *Jeune École*:

The small number of combatant ships available [at the time] necessitated research on the strategy and tactics for carrying on defense of our maritime borders with the forces of a "small navy" in cooperation with ground forces. . . . Its essence—the delivering of quick strikes on the main objective of the enemy without being separated from one's base, with all types of forces secretly concentrated and jointly operating from opposite directions . . . [using] surface ships, torpedo boats, submarines, aviation, and coastal artillery organized on mine-artillery positions . . . [—amounted to the best use of what resources were available].<sup>43</sup>

The thrust of the Young School was blunted by Joseph Stalin. He never endorsed its thinking. In 1928 the Revolutionary Military Council decided to create a fleet whose missions were largely coastal and in support of the army.<sup>44</sup> On 27 May 1936 a decision to create a "large sea and ocean fleet" was approved instead.<sup>45</sup> Stalin's initiative did not arise from a clear strategic assessment or force-planning process. Whatever his reasons were—and the relevant documents have not emerged—during the second half of the 1930s measures were put in hand to build a high-seas fleet.<sup>46</sup> Admiral Nikolai Kuznetsov, appointed commander in chief of the Soviet navy in April 1939, explained in 1965 that this building plan coincided with the emergence of a new "Soviet School" that melded Young School and Old School thinking, in a manner reminiscent of the changes Lanessan had initiated in the French navy in the early 1900s.<sup>47</sup> The project was stymied, however, because despite successes achieved with tanks and aircraft, the sheer size of the shipbuilding program Stalin proposed—which exceeded 1.3 million tons—was completely beyond what Soviet industry could accomplish.<sup>48</sup> The program was suspended, and shipbuilding hastily focused on coastal vessels and submarines once again as cooperation with Germany turned to fears of war in the months prior to June 1941.

The rhetorical impression given is that the large battleships and cruisers Stalin wanted would have shifted the navy's focus from defense to offense and from coastal to oceanic waters; the stated strategic aim in 1939 was to achieve sea supremacy in the four fleet areas. But there was no definition of why or to what end. On one hand, the battleships were quite unsuited to shallow-water operations, and on the other, no plans have come to light showing how these ships would have been deployed oceanically. Kuznetsov was to admit that after talking to Stalin late in 1939 he was "not quite clear in [his own] head why they were being built at all."<sup>49</sup> In retrospect, it would seem that this huge effort—which was Stalin's and Stalin's alone; no one dared oppose him—was a response to German plans (and therefore consistent with interwar arms racing) but was also inspired by ideas of Soviet imperium very similar to Hitler's ambitions for Germany. It amounted in the end to nothing more than a vainglorious political statement intended to demonstrate that the Soviet Union was capable of building (or buying) a navy as good as that of any other major power.<sup>50</sup> Because Stalin's building program was hastily abandoned, the Soviet navy actually fought World War II as a coastal force, supporting the army's flank.

After World War II Stalin threw naval planning into reverse; instead of returning to his obsession with size, he reined the navy in. In 1948 he said the Soviet Union had no need "to protect ocean lines of communications. . . . We need to guard the shores and coastal shipping"; in 1950 he criticized naval officers for "blindly copying the Americans and the English. . . . We are not thinking about conducting ocean battles, but will fight close to our shores."<sup>51</sup> Effectively, whatever large ships were available would dilute the navy's dependence on submarines and flotillas of small craft. Nonetheless, the latter would remain the backbone of the navy, continuing to operate from fortified coastal bases defended by artillery, mines, naval infantry, and fighter aircraft. The large ships would not operate oceanically but at a "tactically favorable distance" to retain command of the sea in specific areas to deny the enemy its strategic objectives.<sup>52</sup> The overall implication was that the flotilla forces needed to be supplemented by heavier squadron forces if the strategically defensive but tactically offensive concept known as "active defense" was to be realized.<sup>53</sup>

While Nikita Khrushchev, now the Soviet leader, implemented a massive submarine building program starting in 1956, his political weakness (which led to his eventual fall from power in 1964) meant that sufficient elements of the Soviet School fleet-in-being concept remained to pave the way for the gradual construction of a fleet capable of more than sea denial.<sup>54</sup> But it was to be a fleet that was built around the army's territorially inspired doctrine of "deeply echeloned zones of defense," with three zones—near, far, and open-ocean—that theoretically extended to the coasts of the Soviet Union's potential enemies.<sup>55</sup>

## CHINESE GUERILLA WARFARE GOES TO SEA

The Chinese navy that emerged following the communist triumph in 1949 had much in common with that of the Soviets. Chinese naval developments in the 1950s were circumscribed by economic constraints similar to those experienced by the Soviets in the 1920s and '30s. As its formal title made clear, the People's Liberation Army Navy was subordinate to the army, as in the Soviet model. Geographically and ideologically, both China and the USSR were continental powers, and both regimes advocated revolutionary war.<sup>56</sup> Yet the notion that the Chinese navy was essentially a replica of its Soviet counterpart obscures important home-grown influences.

Chinese strategists clearly possessed their own intellectual agency. Mao Zedong, after all, was a towering military theorist in his own right, and his pervasive influence reached naval affairs. The similarities between Mao's strategic thought and that of the Soviet Young School may have made some of the imported Soviet naval concepts more digestible. But it seems unlikely that the Chinese would have unquestioningly privileged foreign ideas over their own thinking.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, Chinese combat experiences at sea in the 1950s and 1960s produced enduring lessons that were peculiar to China's local circumstances. Similarly, doctrinal developments and force modernization were products of thoughtful integration of domestic and foreign ideas. The Chinese were by no means unthinking automatons who borrowed slavishly from their Soviet patrons.

### *Glorious History*

The Chinese navy's operational history, while sparse, has played an important role in forming the service's identity. Official accounts portray the navy's early combat experiences as defining moments. The historiography shows how the PLAN beat the odds, prevailing against technologically and materially superior adversaries. After the communists won the Chinese civil war, the new regime in Beijing faced a grave security situation at sea. The Nationalists (Kuomintang, or KMT) were now on Taiwan but still controlled the littorals and occupied numerous strategically located offshore islands. KMT naval units prowled the mainland shores, harassing shipping and disrupting coastal communications. Despite resource constraints, the Chinese navy improvised and made do with the woefully equipped forces at hand. The PLAN helped dislodge the Nationalists from key islands while putting a stop to the KMT's ability to act with impunity at sea. Guerilla thinking, in fact, served the PLAN well during its early years, and Soviet Young School ideas fitted in easily.<sup>58</sup>

The first objective was the Wanshan Islands, which lay astride critical sea lines of communications at the mouth of the Pearl River, the epicenter of maritime commerce in southern China. In May 1950, the Central Military Commission



directed local commanders to “use the small to strike the big and conduct close-in attack and night attack to bring into full play our forte.”<sup>59</sup> In the first sea battle of the People’s Republic, Chinese small craft snuck into the main harbor of the offshore islands at night and ambushed an enemy flotilla at anchor. In the ensuing melee the communists sank a number of vessels, causing confusion and chaos among the surprised Nationalists. In the most important and dramatic encounter of the attack, a twenty-eight-ton patrol boat severely damaged the 1,200-ton KMT flagship. The communists managed to pull off a major upset, opening the way for taking the islands.

China turned next to the Nationalist-occupied Yijiangshan Islands off the Zhejiang coast. Prior to launching the famous 1955 Yijiangshan campaign, dur-

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*The PLAN’s current naval strategy, which enlarges China’s maritime defense perimeter farther out to open waters, is an outgrowth of rather than a break with its formative period.*

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ing which the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) successfully conducted its first joint amphibious operation, Chinese forces sought to wrest control of the air and seas from the

KMT. To clear the approaches to Yijiangshan, the communists had to neutralize enemy naval forces, particularly the corvette *Taiping*, patrolling nearby around Dachen Island. The PLAN secretly dispatched four torpedo boats—using larger ships to screen their movement—to forward staging areas, where they awaited orders for a surprise attack. In the meantime, aerial bombardment against Dachen attempted to distract the KMT defenders. When *Taiping* was detected on the night of 14 November 1954, shore-based radar guided the twenty-ton torpedo boats to their 1,430-ton target. The hit-and-run torpedo attack sank the much larger warship, tilting control of the local waters toward the communists.

The struggle against the Nationalists culminated in a series of sea battles in 1965. On 6 August six torpedo boats and four fast patrol craft from the PLAN’s South Sea Fleet sprang a surprise on the 1,250-ton *Jianmen* and the 450-ton *Zhangjiang* off the waters of Dongshan Island, near the Fujian–Guangdong provincial border. The night attack sank both vessels, killing 170 men, including a rear admiral, and capturing thirty-three others. The “86 Sea Battle” remains a celebrated and carefully studied victory in the Chinese navy. Three months later, six torpedo boats and six fast patrol craft engaged in another night battle, this time against the KMT’s 945-ton *Yongchang* and 903-ton *Yongtai* just east of Quanzhou, Fujian. After a fierce exchange, a severely damaged *Yongtai* fled the scene, and *Yongchang* sank from two torpedo hits and follow-on gunfire.<sup>60</sup>

These early victories became integral parts of the PLAN’s institutional memory. They resonate to this day. The Chinese navy’s handbook for officers and enlisted, for example, recounts these feats in a section entitled the “Glorious

History of the Navy.”<sup>61</sup> Such a historical narrative conveys the service’s tradition of resourcefulness in the face of adversity. It illustrates the importance of offensive spirit, stratagem, and surprise at sea. It casts China in the role of David against the Nationalist Goliath. Chinese campaign histories go to great lengths to show how the Nationalist ships vastly exceeded the PLAN’s in displacement. But it also sends the message that China must still prepare for conflicts involving superior adversaries. The problem of overcoming the power asymmetry between weaker and stronger sides is as relevant today as it was six decades ago; it is as relevant for China then and now as it was for France in the late nineteenth century and for Russia after the revolution.

Perhaps more importantly, the navy’s formative experiences highlight the influence of the war-fighting traditions of the People’s Liberation Army, forged in the brutal, decades-long civil war. The hit-and-run attacks that featured so prominently at sea have their antecedents in Mao Zedong’s guerilla warfare. For example, writing in *Military History*, a bimonthly journal of the Academy of Military Science, Zhou Lingui praises the nascent Chinese navy for transposing guerilla tactics to the maritime domain. “At the time,” Zhou observes, “the vast majority of the naval troops and officers originated from the army, boasting rich operational experiences on land. Consciously or unconsciously, they applied those valuable lessons from guerilla warfare on land to combat at sea.”<sup>62</sup> The authors of a study extolling the continuing relevance of Mao’s military theories in the twenty-first century credit the chairman for inspiring the early naval actions of the 1950s and ’60s. Mao’s people’s war concept, they contend, helped “create such tactics as rely on islands and shores, close-in fighting and night fighting, sea-air coordination, shore-ship coordination, near seas annihilation, and small boats fighting large ships.”<sup>63</sup>

### *Sabotage Warfare at Sea*

The pressing Nationalist threat in the first half of the 1950s compelled the PLAN to take action. The operational principles behind the engagements at sea were largely implicit. Formal operational guidance did not emerge until the mid-1950s. Practice had to come before theory. At length, in March 1956, the Central Military Commission issued military strategic guidance under the rubric of “active defense, defend the motherland.” “Active defense,” a concept that Mao developed and refined in the 1930s, called for the employment of offensive operations and tactics to achieve strategically defensive goals. The navy’s role was to support the army and the air force against the enemy on land. Under active defense, the PLAN’s missions were to

conduct joint counter landing operations with ground and air forces; wreck the enemy’s sea lines of communications, severing the supply of materiel and manpower;

weaken and annihilate the enemy's seaborne transport tools and combat vessels; jointly operate with ground forces in contests over key points and locations along the coast; guarantee the security of our coastal base system and strategic locations; support ground forces in littoral flanking operations; act in concert with ground forces to recover offshore islands and all territories.<sup>64</sup>

In 1957, Admiral Xiao Jinguang, the first commander of the PLAN (1950–79), more systematically developed operational guidance for the Chinese navy. Xiao, a Long March veteran and a corps commander of the Fourth Field Army during the Chinese civil war, was an army officer, with no training or background in naval affairs. He and many of his comrades had to adapt quickly to an entirely new operational domain in which China's adversaries, the Nationalists aided by the United States, seemed to hold an upper hand. It was therefore not surprising that Xiao applied what he knew best to his new task of leading the PLAN.

After consulting Mao Zedong's military writings from the 1920s and 1930s and those of Soviet experts, Xiao articulated the operational concept of "sabotage warfare at sea" (海上破袭战). Confronted with better-armed enemies, he understood that China was in no position to fight them head-on. Drawing on his own battlefield experiences, the admiral reasoned that inferior Chinese forces had to "use suddenness and sabotage and guerilla tactics to unceasingly attack and destroy the enemy, accumulate small victories in place of big wins, fully leverage and bring into play our advantageous conditions, exploit and create unfavorable conditions for the enemy, and implement protracted war."<sup>65</sup> Mao would have instantly recognized these ideas as his own.

Four key features characterized Xiao's sabotage warfare at sea. First, it called for the use of all available weaponry to deliver all possible types of attacks against the enemy. Second, it emphasized covert action and sudden surprise attacks to overpower unsuspecting or unprepared adversaries, so as to seize the initiative. Third, it required offensive campaigns and tactics to assault unceasingly the effective strength of the enemy. Fourth, it demanded the agile use of troops and combat styles to preserve one's own forces while annihilating the opponent. Xiao essentially codified what his forces had practiced out of sheer necessity in previous years. In contrast to a "naval strategy" as such, seeking to align available means with larger political aims, the admiral furnished a concept that was largely operational and tactical in nature. Xiao, in essence, identified methods for winning battles.

Surprise, deception, unorthodox methods, offensive spirit, and small incremental victories were essential to Xiao's conception of naval battle. According to the PLAN's encyclopedia, sabotage warfare at sea involved

offensive operations at sea in which naval forces employ destructive and surprise attacks against the enemy. It is also known as guerrilla warfare or irregular warfare at

sea. It is a combat style that relies on small groups of naval forces to carry out covert surprise attacks. . . . To achieve the operational objectives, it uses unconventional combat methods to attack the enemy's critical targets. In coordination with conventional operations on the strategic and campaign levels, it seeks to annihilate, weaken, deplete, tire out, and divide the enemy in order to pin down the enemy or throw into confusion the enemy's deployment of forces.<sup>66</sup>

Opportunism suffused the concept. Sabotage warfare at sea sought to exploit China's complex maritime geography, notably the convoluted eighteen-thousand-kilometer (eleven-thousand-mile) coastline and the offshore islands that dot the approaches to the mainland. Chinese naval forces could use the shorelines and islands to disperse and hide, to await orders, to deploy and redeploy, to launch and coordinate attacks, and to operate under the cover of shore-based artillery and naval aviation.<sup>67</sup> The intended targets of such sabotage were vulnerable transport vessels, isolated warships, and poorly defended naval bases and ports. The specific tactics to destroy such military objects included rapid raids with high-speed vessels and aircraft, minelaying, hunter-killer submarine operations, and sneak attacks after infiltration of enemy ports. In keeping with Mao's people's war, conventional forces would be supported by fishermen and the coastal population.

Xiao's operational concept provided an important organizing principle around which the Chinese navy could employ tactics and develop weaponry. To Zuo Liping of the Naval Military Studies Research Institute, sabotage warfare at sea was "a type of innovation in military theory." "The navy," Zuo claims, "not only combined research with actual combat experience, but it also provided a naval theory with Chinese characteristics. The development of sabotage warfare at sea as operational guidance represented a type of naval thought that was highly strategic and comprehensive."<sup>68</sup> Note that Zuo describes the theory as an operational framework rather than a strategic one. It is important to reemphasize, therefore, that Xiao offered a tactical solution for the weaker side at sea. But his approach left largely unanswered how the navy would serve China's foreign-policy and longer-term strategic objectives.

While China's own theorizing and its hard-won lessons at sea informed the PLAN's operational doctrine, a major source of early communist naval thinking was undoubtedly the Soviet Union. In August 1950, Admiral Xiao convened the first navy conference to discuss the future development and direction of the PLAN. To Xiao, ideological kinship as well as access to technology and know-how made the Soviet navy a logical, politically correct partner. As he later observed, "Especially for our navy, which was starting from scratch, it was no good to lean on our own experiences and to grope about by ourselves. Only by learning well and borrowing from others' advanced experiences could we quickly

build up a powerful navy that was modern and conventional.”<sup>69</sup> Attesting to the importance attached to cooperation with the Soviet Union, Xiao in April 1952 led the first delegation to Moscow to negotiate the purchase of naval weaponry. After several rounds of talks, the two sides agreed to a major transfer of warships and submarines in June 1953. In the meantime, Soviet consultants and experts rotated through the Dalian Naval Academy. Between 1949 and 1960, nearly 3,400 advisers visited the PLAN.

Even so, Xiao’s memoir acknowledges that considerable debate divided his subordinates over the initial decision to depend on the Soviets. On one side, former Nationalist naval officers who had defected to the communists during the civil war argued that access to Western, particularly British and American, technologies should not be written off. On the other side, doctrinaire adherents of people’s war contended that they had more to learn from their own civil-war experiences than from foreign powers. The resistance to Soviet technology and naval ideas came from continentalist cadres who favored strong land forces and whose faith in Mao’s people’s war doctrine was almost mystical. The argument in China thus bore noticeable similarities to the debate that had raged between the Old and Young Schools in the Soviet Union during the 1930s. The Chinese continentalists, like the Soviet political leaders before them, applied their mindset to naval affairs.

Xiao himself opposed blind adoption of all things Soviet. He insisted that the Chinese navy had to be selective, rejecting Soviet ways that were unsuited to China’s unique, local conditions. To him it was plain that the PLAN could draw technological and institutional lessons from the Soviets. But it was imperative for the service to stick to its own traditions on such important matters as political indoctrination.

*“Naval Aviation, Submarines, Fast Attack Craft”*

Xiao’s landmark meeting in August 1950 produced a lasting effect on the Chinese navy’s force structure. The nation’s dismal economic, industrial, and technological conditions limited the navy’s ambitions and options, as had been the case for the navies of France and the Soviet Union. Analogously, the PLAN clearly could not stand up to the modern navies of the West on a symmetrical basis. Also, the immediate Nationalist danger, much closer to home, dictated the scope of naval modernization. In summarizing the findings of the conference, Xiao concluded, “With an eye toward long-term development and departing from the current situation, we will build light combat power at sea that is modern and offensive in nature. We need to first organize and develop our current capabilities and, on the foundation of those current capabilities, develop torpedo boats, submarines, and naval aviation to gradually build a strong, national navy.”<sup>70</sup>

Xiao's call for surface, undersea, and air forces reflected an early appreciation of the character of naval warfare. "Modern sea battle," he declared in 1950, "is necessarily a kind of three-dimensional war and is a kind of composite war. We must use the aircraft above the waves, the warships on the sea's surface, the submarines in the water, and artillery along the coast to form a synergy of integrated power. In war, the lack of any one of those capabilities could well spell disaster."<sup>71</sup> The offshore engagements of the 1950s and 1960s amply validated the importance of mutual support between surface forces and shore-based weaponry. Xiao's directive—commonly known as "*kong* [空], *qian* [潜], *kuai* [快]," Chinese shorthand for "naval aviation, submarines, fast attack craft"—set the course for the PLAN's buildup over the next two decades.

Initially, torpedo boats were imported from the Soviet Union or constructed in Chinese shipyards from Soviet designs and parts. In the 1960s, local industry began to deliver more ship types, also of Soviet origin. Frigates, submarine chasers, minesweepers, guided-missile fast attack craft, torpedo boats, patrol boats, diesel-electric submarines, and shore-based tactical bombers joined the fleet. The PLAN fielded large numbers of small craft and submarines, particularly the Type 021 Huangfeng guided-missile boats and the Type 033 Romeo-class submarines, while slighting larger surface combatants and naval aviation. These added capabilities constituted the light naval force that Xiao set forth in 1950. They were well suited for coastal combat marked by speed, concealment, mobility, and offensive punch.

### *From the Lost Years to "Near-Seas Defense"*

The Chinese navy's early operational history, the doctrine of sabotage warfare at sea, and the buildup that began in the 1950s produced legacies that proved stubbornly resistant to change. Moreover, external shocks and strategic decisions helped entrench the status quo. For one thing, the chaos of the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s and 1970s severely disrupted the modernization process. For another, Mao's determination to pursue an undersea nuclear deterrent strained resources while diverting attention from conventional forces. China thus struggled to remake its light, coastal-force posture.

Despite some important developments for the Chinese navy in the 1970s, including the introduction of the Type 051 Luda-class guided-missile destroyer and the Type 091 Han-class nuclear attack submarine, obsolescent platforms composed the bulk of the navy. The naval service overproduced outdated ships and submarines and neglected new research and development projects. Single-mission platforms that lacked organic self-defense weapons and nonexistent coordination between combat arms hobbled the PLAN. The limited range of shore-based airpower, on which surface units depended for protection against air



and submarine threats, confined naval operations to two hundred nautical miles from mainland shores.<sup>72</sup> In short, the Chinese navy lacked the ability to wage the type of “three-dimensional war” that Xiao had envisioned two decades before. Worse, the problems would persist for decades.

Naval doctrine too was stuck in the past. In the 1960s, ’70s, and early ’80s little had changed since the 1950s. According to Shi Xiaoqin, a naval analyst at the Academy of Military Science,

the main mission was to exploit the risks inherent to transiting straits to delay, to the extent possible, the initial offensives of the enemy’s navy. Once the delaying phase ended, there would be a transition to positional defensive warfare for holding actions along the coast together with guerilla warfare at sea in the enemy’s rear. [These operations] all emphasized reliance on islands and shores, set-piece battlefields, and reliance on support from all types of shore-based weaponry and firepower in order to bring about bastion defense. Surprise attacks against the enemy’s rear communications constituted the main form of guerilla warfare at sea.<sup>73</sup>

Outmoded doctrine and bloated force structure reinforced each other, in a vicious cycle. This state of affairs would persist until Admiral Liu Huaqing became the PLAN’s commander (1982–87). Much has already been written in the West about Liu’s central role in advancing the concept of “near-seas defense” (or “off-shore defense”), and no reprise of the existing literature will be attempted here.<sup>74</sup> It is worth noting, however, that the near-seas defense strategy remains the bedrock for the Chinese navy. It is therefore an important concept, one that bridges the PLAN’s doctrinal past, present, and future. The PLAN encyclopedia states,

[Near-seas defense involves] the combined use of all kinds of methods to exercise the overall effects of maritime power to preserve oneself to the maximum extent while unceasingly exhausting and annihilating the attacking enemy. It requires a sufficient grasp of mobile combat capabilities to search and destroy the enemy, gradually shift the power balance, change the strategic situation, and thereby appropriately time the transition to the strategic counter offensive and attack.<sup>75</sup>

The concept of near-seas defense articulated a long-term, regionally oriented strategy that enlarged China’s maritime defense perimeter, extending the Chinese navy’s area of operations much farther from mainland shores in a series of echelons in a manner that reflected earlier Soviet thinking. Instead of fighting the enemy in China’s coastal waters, the PLAN aimed to keep the opponent at arm’s length while shielding from attack important political and economic centers on the seaboard. In contrast to sabotage warfare at sea, which sought to tie up or slow down enemy forces, near-seas defense would defeat and roll back the enemy offensive. Instead of pinpricks and hit-and-run attacks with small forces, more-substantial and organized formations would be involved in naval engagements.

In contrast to its previous subordination to the army and role as an adjunct to land operations, the navy would enjoy greater scope for action as an independent, strategic service.

Yet the strategy did not grow out of a vacuum. It was (and remains) anchored in long-standing strategic principles. For example, Liu insisted that near-seas defense conformed to the strategic guidance of active defense. It would employ offensive means for strategically defensive goals, including such core interests as national unity, territorial integrity, and maritime rights. At the same time, near-seas defense continues to assume that China will fight from a position of material weakness. To close the gap in naval power, offensive action would be employed aggressively to grind down the enemy. Over time, an accumulation of such attacks would shift the naval balance, perhaps decisively, in China's favor, affording the PLAN the opportunity to go on the offensive. The sequence of events parallels the famous three phases in Mao's protracted-war concept that envisioned a similar reversal of fortunes between the enemy and the communists.

Moreover, sabotage warfare was not abandoned outright. Rather, it was subsumed into the new, larger strategic concept. In a retrospective of China's naval strategy during the era of "paramount leader" Deng Xiaoping, Liu Zhongmin of the Ocean University of China explicitly points to positional, mobile, and guerilla warfare in tracing the lineage of near-seas defense back to Mao's revolutionary era.<sup>76</sup> To Liu, the strategy closely links naval operations farther from shore to combat on land and near the coastline, tethering the navy to homeland defense. With more symmetrical, conventional forces operating at the outer limits of China's maritime defense perimeter, sabotage warfare would presumably play a subsidiary but no less important role in rear areas close to shore.

## ECHOES OF THE PAST

Chinese analysts continue to look back to their strategic traditions for guidance about future wars at sea. Quan Jinfu and Chen Ming, two professors from China's Naval Command College, call on the PLAN to prepare for "naval strategic operations," which they define as "operations employing naval power to fulfill objectives of the war at sea that greatly influence the war as a whole." To them, naval combat would assume such familiar forms as mobile warfare at sea, positional warfare at sea, and sabotage guerilla warfare at sea, concepts drawn directly from Mao's writings.<sup>77</sup> Similarly, Wang Zheng at the Chinese National Defense University argues that future wars under "informatized conditions" would use methods that would have been familiar to guerilla fighters in the 1930s. Wang declares that the People's Liberation Army must seek to "trap the enemy in the vast seas of people's war with special operations, sabotage warfare, and guerilla warfare at sea using high-technology weapons deep behind enemy lines."<sup>78</sup>

Admiral Xiao's early emphasis on aircraft, submarines, and fast attack craft is still visible in the force structures of the PLAN and its sister services. Between 2000 and 2012, China's fleet of attack submarines increased eightfold, from five boats to forty.<sup>79</sup> This modern undersea force can launch antiship cruise missiles (ASCMs) while submerged, posing a potent threat to surface forces. Assuming that the likely course of an oncoming enemy fleet could be anticipated, these

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*An alternative school of naval thought, one rooted in coastal defense, follows an asymmetric path intended to enable the weak to take down the strong.*

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submarines would transit to firing positions in advance and wait for the right time to spring an ambush. With the aid of off-board sensors and targeting systems, dispersed

PLAN submarines could fire coordinated, multivector missile salvos to surprise the adversary at a distance.<sup>80</sup>

The analogue to the PLAN's light torpedo forces of the 1950s is the large fleet of Type 022 Houbei fast attack craft. According to Nan Li of the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island, "The Type 022 . . . represents a continuation of the PLAN's historical ethos as a successful, small-ship navy that is able to take on adversaries with potentially more substantial deployments."<sup>81</sup> Armed with long-range antiship cruise missiles, these wave-piercing catamarans pack a punch.<sup>82</sup> The stealthy hull structure, high speed, and small size of the Houbeis make them ideal platforms for evading enemies and launching surprise attacks in offshore waters. With at least sixty boats in service, the PLAN may be well positioned to launch coordinated saturation missile volleys to overpower fleet defenses.<sup>83</sup> The Type 022s could form wolf packs to conduct the hit-and-run tactics envisioned in sabotage warfare at sea.

Notably, Chinese analysts continue to extol the value of the submarine and fast attack craft as maritime guerilla forces. An extensive study on the twenty-first-century relevance of fast attack craft envisions large numbers of small modern combatants in the near seas providing support to the larger surface fleet operating in the far seas.<sup>84</sup> Three analysts from the Navy Engineering College propose "maritime swarming warfare" in future wars at sea, a concept that would fit very well with the Type 022. Surprise attacks, ambushes, concealment, and deception would characterize swarming tactics.<sup>85</sup> Similarly, two researchers at the Naval Command College have invoked "guerilla warfare tactics" on numerous occasions to illustrate how modern attack submarines could engage carrier strike groups.<sup>86</sup>

China's land-based air and missile forces can potentially influence events at sea independently or in conjunction with Chinese surface and undersea forces. The PLAN's air arm fields shore-based fixed-wing aircraft that could fire ASCMs. Notably, the Su-30MKK multirole fighter and the H-6 medium-range bomber

can threaten surface ships cruising well east of the “first island chain” (running generally from Kamchatka through Japan, the Ryukyus, and the northern Philippines to Borneo). Massed formations of such maritime strike aircraft armed with long-range ASCMs could conceivably deliver concentrated blows to overwhelm enemy fleet defenses.

The antiship ballistic missile (ASBM)—a maneuverable ballistic weapon capable of hitting moving targets at sea—of the Second Artillery Corps, China’s strategic missile force, is perhaps the ultimate technical expression of shore-based firepower. With a range reportedly exceeding eight hundred nautical miles, the truck-mounted missile joins an extended family of ship-killing missiles that can be fired from submarines, ships, and aircraft. Whether it will perform as advertised has been a subject of intense debate, but its existence is an unmistakable sign that the Chinese are seeking to hold at risk an enemy’s surface fleet with as many maritime strike options as possible.

A hypothetical Sino-U.S. war at sea perhaps best illustrates how the sabotage warfare of the 1950s might still take place in the twenty-first century. Tactically, China would seek to engage and interdict American naval forces at the maximum effective ranges that its weaponry would permit. Antiship ballistic missiles and long-range aircraft could deliver the first blows: ASBM raids and massed formations of maritime strike aircraft armed with long-range ASCMs could conceivably punch through a U.S. fleet’s defenses. Such shore-based firepower allows China to deliver ordnance on an American carrier strike group directly from the mainland well before it could get close enough to shore to retaliate in kind with its combat aircraft. As the U.S. fleet approached the Chinese seaboard it would then encounter lurking ASCM-armed submarines, stealthy fast attack craft, and other units armed with shorter-range missiles. Resistance would become stiffest and deadliest in this inner ring of China’s defense, where sabotage warfare involving high-tech guerilla tactics would most likely be employed.

## DISCERNING CHANGE AND CONTINUITY

Yet there is no denying that change is afoot. The PLA Navy has grown rapidly from a coastal-defense force composed of largely obsolescent Soviet-era technologies into a modern naval service. Over the past two decades, multiple classes of China’s major surface combatants—notably the Type 052D Luyang III destroyer, the Type 054A Jiangkai II frigate, and the Type 056 Jiangdao corvette—have entered serial production, adding mass and balance to the fleet. The buildup of such warships has accelerated since 2008. China’s first aircraft carrier, *Liaoning*, joined the fleet in 2012. Only twenty years have elapsed since China began to construct and import modern frontline fighting ships. This is an impressive feat by any standard.

At the same time, the PLAN appears to be pursuing an even more outward-looking naval strategy. While the most recent defense white papers insist that the Chinese navy's primary task remains near-seas defense, the 2009 and 2011 editions explicitly acknowledge the need for the PLAN to operate in the "far seas." The 2013 report calls on the Chinese navy to "enhance far seas mobile operations." While the geographic scope of the far seas has been subject to varying interpretations, actual Chinese naval operations in recent years suggest that the term likely encompasses "a vast area that stretches from the northwest Pacific to the east Indian Ocean."<sup>87</sup> It has become commonplace for Chinese naval flotillas to sail through the narrow seas of the Ryukyu island chain and cruise in the open waters of the western Pacific. The PLAN has also dispatched naval escorts on antipiracy missions in the Gulf of Aden on an uninterrupted basis since December 2008.

The Chinese navy is thus at once posturing itself to conduct defense-in-depth operations to protect the homeland from seaborne attack and moving toward a more expeditionary, blue-water force. The Janus-faced character of Chinese naval power at present suggests that critical decisions loom in the future. As Shi Xiaoqin persuasively argues, the Chinese navy will soon have to reassess both its strategic thinking and its force structure. Whether sabotage warfare at sea should give way to symmetrical naval engagements and whether a carrier-centered fleet should replace a submarine-oriented one are questions of growing urgency for the PLAN. "Clearly," Shi concludes, "the Chinese navy stands at a crossroad."<sup>88</sup>

If Shi is right, the PLAN's force structure, strategy, and institutional identity could follow any of several distinct pathways. First, China could, over time, construct a navy that resembles the Anglo-American model of sea power. In this case, the PLAN would gradually shed its small-ship ethos and capabilities. Second, China could continue to focus on force modernization and doctrinal development aimed at keeping hostile powers out of its backyard. Expeditionary forces would be subordinated to this primary defensive task, while conducting lesser included missions in distant waters during peacetime. Third, a two-tiered force could coexist, perhaps uneasily, within the PLAN, though whether China could afford or sustain a navy along two parallel tracks remains to be seen. As the Chinese navy evolves in the coming years, it will have to grapple with these fundamental choices on force structure and naval thought.

The purpose here is not to predict what the precise outcome will be. The foregoing analysis suggests that past may well be prologue. China's formative experiences and guerilla ethos appear quite durable and applicable in the twenty-first century. At the very least, China's concept of sabotage warfare at sea provides a baseline by which to measure the degree of continuity and change in future Chinese naval strategy. At the same time, the evolution of various incarnations of

the Young School impulse in the West points to a universal logic with respect to the naval strategy of the weaker side. Owing to asymmetries in sea power, China would have likely gravitated to Xiao's war-fighting doctrines even in the absence of Soviet and Maoist influences. It is also worth acknowledging that China's naval future will not likely follow in lockstep the French and Soviet experiences—the political and economic conditions that shaped naval thought in France, the Soviet Union, and China were too different, notwithstanding clear similarities. The impressive trajectory of China's comprehensive national power could furnish Beijing options comparable in ambitiousness to the Anglo-American model of sea power, options of which French and Soviet strategists could only have dreamed.

Despite these uncertainties, what is clear is that this alternative school of thought stands quite apart from the British and American ways of naval warfare. From its very first days, it has emphasized technological innovation, pursuit of new operational methods, deception, camouflage, joint operations transcending the land-sea divide, assaults on rear areas and lines of communications, and guerrilla methods. It is a view of the sea that is essentially territorial and consequently alien to the Anglo-American understanding of naval warfare. The Chinese thus likely think differently from adherents of the Anglo-American tradition about naval strategy and will likely fight differently at sea. Whereas French and Soviet naval thought emerged as a response to austerity and then faded, in Chinese hands the alternative approach to naval warfare has continued, and the innovation and technology it demands have been fully funded. It thus behooves Western policy makers and strategists to keep a steady eye on China's turn to the seas.

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#### NOTES

- This article began as a conversation between the authors at the Center on Irregular Warfare and Armed Groups (CIWAG) Irregular Warfare Symposium at the Naval War College in 2010. They would like to thank Marc Genest and Andrea Dew for bringing them together. The authors would also like to thank Nicholas Lambert, Norman Polmar, and Wayne Hughes for their comments on earlier drafts.
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3. Alexander C. Huang, "The PLA Navy at War, 1949–1999: From Coastal Defense to Distant Operations," in *Chinese Warfighting: The PLA Experience since 1949*, ed. Mark A. Ryan et al. (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 2003), pp. 265–66.



4. Arne Røksund, *The Jeune École: The Strategy of the Weak* (Leiden, Neth.: Brill, 2007), pp. xi–xii; Paul Halpern, *The Mediterranean Naval Situation 1908–1914* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1971), pp. 47–48.
5. David H. Olivier, “Two Sides of the Same Coin: German and French Maritime Strategies in the Late Nineteenth Century,” in *Commerce Raiding: Historical Case Studies, 1755–2009*, ed. Bruce A. Elleman and S. C. M. Paine, Newport Paper 40 (Newport, R.I.: Naval War College Press, 2013), p. 93; Theodore Ropp, *The Development of a Modern Navy: French Naval Policy 1871–1904*, ed. Stephen S. Roberts (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1987), pp. 19–22; Røksund, *Jeune École*, pp. 1–3.
6. Ropp, *Development of a Modern Navy*, pp. 31–33, 50, 168, 178–79.
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9. Ropp, *Development of a Modern Navy*, pp. 162–64.
10. The crucial difference was that the Imperial German Navy did not seek to undermine Britain’s economy and induce social unrest but to inflict physical damage on its war effort. David H. Olivier, *German Naval Strategy, 1856–1888: Forerunners to Tirpitz* (2004; repr. London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 131–32.
11. M. Gabriel Charmes, *Naval Reform*, trans. J. E. Gordon-Cuming (London: W. H. Allen, 1887), pp. iv–v, xiii.
12. Paul Halpern, “The French Navy, 1880–1914,” in *Technology and Naval Combat in the Twentieth Century and Beyond*, ed. Phillips Payson O’Brien (London: Frank Cass, 2001), p. 37; Ropp, *Development of a Modern Navy*, pp. 112–16.
13. Charmes, *Naval Reform*, p. 28.
14. Ibid., pp. 68, 70. Also Halpern, “French Navy,” p. 39.
15. Ropp, *Development of a Modern Navy*, pp. 159–60. Røksund, *Jeune École*, pp. 64, 67, argues that Ropp misrepresented the outcome of the exercise and that the efficacy of the torpedo boat was never questioned.
16. Røksund, *Jeune École*, p. xi.
17. Ibid., pp. 97, 254–55.
18. Ibid., pp. 104–105.
19. Ibid., pp. 107–108, 117.
20. Lanessan founded the Entente Cordiale Society in 1897, paving the way for the accord. Ropp, *Development of a Modern Navy*, pp. 324, 328; Halpern, *Mediterranean Naval Situation*, pp. 47–49, 50–51.
21. Halpern, *Mediterranean Naval Situation*, p. 48; Olivier, “Two Sides of the Same Coin,” pp. 99–100.
22. See the vigorous defense in Erik Dahl, “Net-centric before Its Time: The Jeune École and Its Lessons for Today,” *Naval War College Review* 58, no. 4 (Autumn 2005), pp. 110, 112, 119–25.
23. Røksund, *Jeune École*, p. xiv.
24. Ropp, *Development of a Modern Navy*, p. 215, a view echoed by Geoffrey Till, *Seapower: A Guide for the Twenty-First Century*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 70. Olivier, “Two Sides of the Same Coin,” p. 80, goes farther, calling it an “entirely new philosophy of war at sea.”
25. Geoffrey Till, *Maritime Strategy and the Nuclear Age*, 2nd ed. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1984), p. 37. Also Nicholas A. Lambert, “Admiral Sir John Fisher and the Concept of Flotilla Defence, 1904–9,” in *Technology and Naval Combat*, ed. O’Brien, pp. 75–80.
26. Nicholas A. Lambert, *Sir John Fisher’s Naval Revolution* (Columbia: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1999), p. 117.
27. Ibid., p. 123.
28. Lambert, “Concept of Flotilla Defence,” p. 82.
29. Ibid., p. 81.
30. Lambert, *Naval Revolution*, p. 121. This comment is somewhat dismissive of Aube.
31. Ibid., pp. 122, 125; Charles H. Fairbanks, Jr., “The Origins of the Dreadnought Revolution: A Historiographical Essay,” *International History Review* 13, no. 2 (May 1991), pp. 265–66.



32. Lambert, *Naval Revolution*, p. 124.
33. Ibid., pp. 162–63. The italics are Fisher's and entirely characteristic of his emphatic style.
34. Ibid., pp. 176, 182. Also Till, *Seapower*, p. 71.
35. The argument that if the *Jeune École* extolled the advantages of technology somewhat excessively, it was nonetheless ahead of its time has been advanced by a number of authors. For a summary see Dahl, "Net-centric before Its Time," esp. pp. 110, 124–25.
36. Till, *Seapower*, pp. 73, 206.
37. Robert Waring Herrick, *Soviet Naval Strategy* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1968), pp. 21–22; Jürgen Rohwer and Mikhail Monakov, "The Soviet Union's Ocean-Going Fleet, 1935–1956," *International History Review* 18, no. 4 (November 1996), p. 838.
38. Andrei A. Kokoshin, *Soviet Strategic Thought, 1917–91* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998), p. 78; Robert Waring Herrick, "Roles and Missions of the Soviet Navy," in *The Soviet and Other Communist Navies*, ed. James L. George (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1986), pp. 16–17.
39. Robert Waring Herrick, *Soviet Naval Theory and Policy* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1988), p. 50; Rohwer and Monakov, "Soviet Union's Ocean-Going Fleet," pp. 841–42.
40. D. Fedetoff White, "Soviet Naval Doctrine," *RUSI Journal* (August 1935), pp. 608–609; Herrick, "Roles and Missions," pp. 16–17; Rohwer and Monakov, "Soviet Union's Ocean-Going Fleet," p. 845.
41. Kokoshin, *Soviet Strategic Thought*, p. 26; Herrick, *Soviet Naval Strategy*, pp. 19, 21.
42. Herrick, "Roles and Missions," pp. 9–10.
43. Quoted in Herrick, *Soviet Naval Theory and Policy*, p. 12. See also S. G. Gorshkov, *The Sea Power of the State* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1976), p. 135. The parallels between this and the Red Army's thinking in the 1920s about maneuver warfare under Triandafillov and Tukhachevsky are striking; Rohwer and Monakov, "Soviet Union's Ocean-Going Fleet," p. 841.
44. Tobias R. Philbin III, *The Lure of Neptune: German-Soviet Naval Collaboration and Ambitions, 1919–1941* (Columbia: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1994), p. 24.
45. Natalia I. Yegorova, "Stalin's Conception of Maritime Power: Revelations from the Russian Archives," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 28, no. 2 (April 2005), p. 158.
46. Milan L. Hauner, "Stalin's Big-Fleet Program," *Naval War College Review* 57, no. 2 (Spring 2004), p. 106.
47. Herrick, *Soviet Naval Theory and Policy*, pp. 57–59; Philbin, *Lure of Neptune*, p. 144.
48. Hauner, "Stalin's Big-Fleet Program," pp. 106–108; Philbin, *Lure of Neptune*, pp. 24–25, 29, 36.
49. Hauner, "Stalin's Big-Fleet Program," p. 114.
50. Ibid., pp. 88, 91, 114; Philbin, *Lure of Neptune*, pp. 35–36, 143.
51. Yegorova, "Stalin's Conception of Maritime Power," pp. 162–63.
52. Philbin, *Lure of Neptune*, p. 31.
53. "Active defense" in the Soviet sense was the concept of coastal naval operations using small naval craft under land-based air cover. Herrick, *Soviet Naval Theory and Policy*, pp. 13–14, 61–62.
54. Bryan Ranft and Geoffrey Till, *The Sea in Soviet Strategy*, 2nd ed. (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1989), pp. 25–26.
55. Herrick, *Soviet Naval Theory and Policy*, pp. 274–76. Nan Li, "The Evolution of China's Naval Strategy and Capabilities: From 'Near Coast' and 'Near Seas' to 'Far Seas,'" in *The Chinese Navy: Expanding Capabilities, Evolving Roles*, ed. Phillip C. Saunders et al., pp. 109–40, describes how the PLAN has adopted a similar series of zones.
56. David G. Muller, *China as a Maritime Power* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1983), pp. 48, 49–50; Bernard D. Cole, *The Great Wall at Sea*, 2nd ed. (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2010), p. 171.
57. Muller, *China as a Maritime Power*, p. 49, and Cole, *Great Wall at Sea*, pp. 171–72, suggest that the Soviet "Young School" dominated PLAN thinking during this period. Huang, "PLA Navy at War," p. 243, and Till, *Seapower*, p. 73, recognize that the approach was shaped as much by China's circumstances and the desire on the part of some Chinese thinkers to create an alternative maritime strategy.
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# IMPLICATIONS OF XI JINPING'S "TRUE MARITIME POWER"

## Its Context, Significance, and Impact on the Region

*Captain Sukjoon Yoon, Republic of Korea Navy (Retired)*

**X**i Jinping's declaration that China should strive to become a "true maritime power" (海洋強國) has been much discussed in the context of China's "peaceful rise" (和平崛起) and the pursuit of the "Chinese dream" (中國夢).<sup>1</sup> Although there is, at face value, nothing quite new about Xi's exhortation to the Chinese leadership, his remarks need to be understood against a rather complex background of situations, policies, and aspirations if their full significance is to be appreciated.

Xi's policy is not just about geographic dispositions but needs to be seen in terms of U.S. Navy captain Alfred Thayer Mahan's sea-power theory—the "neo-Mahanian standard," as scholars of the U.S. Naval War College have termed it.<sup>2</sup> This issue bridges the China of the past and modern China; as a central pillar of Xi's grand national strategy, China's maritime power is a matter of extraordinary

importance for its future.

We need to examine a number of questions if we are really to grasp what it means for China to become a true maritime power. What is the history of Chinese maritime power? Why has Xi Jinping suddenly given such emphasis to China's emergence as a "true maritime power"? How does he understand this term—that is, what is the character of "true maritime power"? What forces are driving the accomplishment of maritime-power status? How are the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and its navy (the PLAN) and the newly established China

*Captain Sukjoon Yoon is currently a senior research fellow of the Korea Institute for Maritime Strategy and a visiting professor at Sejong University, in Seoul. Captain Yoon's more than thirty years of commissioned service in the Republic of Korea Navy (ROKN) included thirteen years at sea, as well as command and staff appointments. He was director of maritime strategy studies at the ROKN Naval War College, a senior lecturer at the ROKN Naval Academy, and commanding officer of ROK Station Naval Modernization (2014). A chapter in Tran Truong Thuy and John Jenner, eds., South China Sea, is forthcoming.*

Coast Guard (CCG) involved in implementing China's maritime aspirations? What are the implications for, and the likely impacts on, the Asia-Pacific region?

## THE IMPORTANCE OF A BALANCED NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR CHINA

China's national strategy is undergoing a significant transformation. At both the eighteenth Communist Party Congress in November 2012 and the first plenary session of the twelfth National People's Congress in March 2013, great importance was placed on China's becoming a true maritime power. Similar remarks had been made earlier; for instance, Hu Jintao (Xi Jinping's predecessor) proposed building up the power of the PLAN to adapt its historical mission to the new century.<sup>3</sup> This mission has now been expanded to include everyone in China—the concept of true maritime power is being used to embolden China's political, ideological, and economic philosophy and, in conjunction with other military, economic, and national-security goals, to project a vision of future national greatness.<sup>4</sup>

Throughout Chinese history, whenever undue emphasis has been given to land power—as exemplified by China's "Great Wall"—this lack of strategic balance has always undermined the nation's development and prosperity.<sup>5</sup> During the hectic Mao Zedong period, Chinese strategists regarded the maritime domain as an imperialist and colonialist sphere, and anyone proposing alternative strategies to the PLA's continental approach was identified as an ideological enemy. Although China has not itself often explicitly defined a national strategy that is definitively "continental" or "maritime," it has usually been characterized—owing to its vast geographic extent and the fact that its predominant cultural interactions have been by land (via the Silk Road) rather than by sea—as a continental power, and this is the current reality.<sup>6</sup>

It would be untrue, however, to suggest that China was ever a "pseudo-maritime power" (海洋貧國), such stereotypical descriptions of its land-oriented national strategy entirely eclipsing its maritime interests.<sup>7</sup> China has never ignored its maritime domain, and there are many historical examples of the Song, Ming, and Yuan Dynasties pursuing maritime expansion rather enthusiastically, going back to what has been called (see below) a "Maritime Silk Road."

Actually, China's national strategies have been mostly neutral in this regard, and its emphasis has shifted between land and sea, as required to preserve peace and stability. Indeed, throughout China's general history the reconciliation of disparities between coastal and inland regions has been a key strategic problem for the Chinese leadership. For example, coastal cities have generally been more crucial to the Chinese economy than those inland, even the various historical capital cities, Chang'an (Xi'an), Luoyang, and Peking (Beijing). The wealthy

coastal cities of today, such as Qingdao, Shanghai, Fuzhou, Dalian, Tianjin, Shenzhen, Guangzhou, and Hong Kong, have played significant parts in China's prosperity since precolonial times, even though China never previously declared a grand national strategy with so clear a maritime orientation as now.<sup>8</sup> Certainly, China's maritime capabilities have always depended on its flourishing eastern cities, which have generally offered a much better life than have the inland cities. In recent years, moreover, China has confronted a new strategic environment that requires a national shift toward the maritime domain.

Thus, both the historical evidence and current strategic challenges indicate that China needs to maintain a balanced linkage (均衡連結) between its geographic strengths and the needs of its economy. Its sea routes have been the principal medium through which China has interacted with the world at large: via the Yellow Sea, the South China Sea (SCS), and the East China Sea (ECS). Whatever the national strategy, the seas around the eastern coastal cities have remained the normal avenues through which China's political, military, economic, and cultural power has been projected to influence weaker neighbors, chiefly Vietnam, Japan, and Korea, though sometimes it has been extended to Middle Eastern and African countries.

During the chaotic Qing period, there were internecine feuds and wars, with the unfortunate result that China failed to implement its comprehensive national strategy (綜合國家大戰略). This meant that China's maritime capacity was inadequate to protect its national security, and thus the Western countries, with their superior maritime forces, dominated the region in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries.<sup>9</sup> The Chinese leadership is still chewing on the bitter memories of this imperial era, and now that it has become economically feasible to do so, it is determined to overcome the consequences of earlier neglect of the seas. China's leaders are therefore now promulgating a grand national strategy intended clearly to deter any further interference by Western "barbarians" and to project boldly China's power and influence abroad.

## CHINA AND NEO-MAHANIAN STRATEGIC THEORIES

What evidence is there that China's maritime strategy is indeed neo-Mahanian? Xi Jinping's concept of "true maritime power" as a means to future national prestige does in fact find some correspondence to traditional Mahanian theory, despite views arguing for the end of sea power.<sup>10</sup> Many Chinese strategists, including Xi, have highlighted the role of China's international trade, of its merchant fleet, and of its naval task forces—especially China's first aircraft carrier, *Liaoning*, deployed in 2012.<sup>11</sup> China's economy relies on a steady flow of seaborne cargo: oil and natural gas, soybeans and grains, and raw materials from the Middle East, South America, and Africa. The Chinese merchant fleet is essential for these



imports and for exporting Chinese goods to foreign markets; the vulnerability of such transport links, the “Malacca Dilemma,” is a fundamental consideration driving China’s quest for true maritime power and for the naval strength that it requires.<sup>12</sup>

In some ways, China is trying to straddle the neo- and post-Mahanian worlds, and the complexity of this stance makes it increasingly likely that China will get involved in armed conflicts at sea. Xi’s exhortation to the Chinese leadership, although not entirely new, should be understood against a rather complicated historical, political, and sociocultural background. For example, his “true maritime power” message in the report of the twelfth National People’s Congress in 2013 focused on defense and military modernization (国防与军队现代化), whereas Hu Jintao’s conception of China’s maritime power in the eighteenth Communist Party Congress report, in 2012, was relegated to the section on “ecological civilization construction” (生态文明建设).<sup>13</sup> Xi Jinping has proposed for true maritime power a theoretical framework that appears to transcribe Mahanian theory directly into PLAN strengths, apparently envisioning epic sea battles much like those fought in Mahan’s time by Western sea powers and also Japan.

There are many interpretations of the ongoing changes in Chinese national strategy, but all agree that Xi Jinping’s recent declaration about true maritime power is highly significant. China clearly wants to be seen as a great power, at least regionally, but should this aim be understood as a restoration of the traditional Middle Kingdom order or in Mahanian terms? To that point, Xi Jinping’s recent acknowledgment that China’s maritime power is founded on three strands (production, merchant and naval shipping, and overseas markets and bases) is entirely consistent with Mahan’s most influential book, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660–1783*.<sup>14</sup> Admittedly, Xi’s approach is more concerned with confronting the strategic challenges of the U.S. “pivot to Asia” than with pounding away at enemy fleets. Yet he is beguiled by the Mahanian concept that national greatness derives from maritime power, so he is calling on Chinese citizens to raise their collective consciousness of the seas as an essential aspect of a great revitalization of the nation—the “Chinese dream.”

Many Western analysts of maritime security affairs have drawn stark comparisons between growing Chinese and declining American maritime power, some suggesting that Europeans hold a “postmodern,” “post-Mahanian” perspective, whereas Asia is entering a “modern,” “neo-Mahanian” world.<sup>15</sup> This situation is seen as an opportunity for China to explore the application of Mahan’s maritime-power theory. For Chinese analysts, however, Xi Jinping’s concept of true maritime power presents China as chief custodian of the regional (in practice, global) sea lines of communication, as the upholder of freedom of navigation and good order at sea.<sup>16</sup>



The actual sources of Xi Jinping's strategic vision of true maritime power appear to be briefings from his advisers, together with such writings as Liu Ming-fu's *Chinese Dream* (中國夢), published in 2010, and Henry Kissinger's *On China*, published in 2012.<sup>17</sup> For Xi, then, the Chinese Dream depends on trade and commerce, mercantile and naval power, and geographic expansion—by which is meant command of the sea (制海權) rather than any sort of colonial imposition. But China is the leading international trade power, and the PLAN sees the United States as an overbearing naval power to be vehemently resisted; so, given China's naval buildup, command of the sea seems likely to be ultimately determined by armed encounter rather than by economic, cultural, or environmental issues.<sup>18</sup> Chinese strategists speak of pursuing maritime power “with Chinese characteristics,” a formulation of Mahanian theory that Western strategists may find difficult to recognize. Following Mahan, the Chinese see naval preparedness as the sharp edge of maritime strategy, but aside from fulfillment of the PLAN's historical mission, they also see maritime power as a path to national prosperity and greatness.

#### THE CONTEXT OF XI'S PLAN TO TRANSFORM CHINA INTO A TRUE MARITIME POWER

The Chinese apply a long perspective; the consequences of the failure in recent centuries to maintain a balanced national strategy have surely influenced Xi Jinping in formulating his current national strategy. Xi took over responsibility for diplomatic affairs in late 2012, and he has since declared four national objectives: safeguarding China's core national interests, continuing to pursue a “new type of great-power relationship” (新型大國關係), boosting China's maritime power (海洋強國), and identifying a new foundation for military strength.<sup>19</sup> Thus the undertaking to enhance Chinese maritime power is central to Xi's foreign policy, and we can list, bearing in mind the strategic challenges faced by his predecessors, several likely reasons why Xi Jinping wants true maritime power, linking and balancing the land and the sea, for China.

First, Xi sees the projection of national power beyond the Chinese continental territory as essential. The term “G2” (i.e., the “Group of Two,” the United States and China) is widely used in East Asia to imply a kind of parity between China and the United States, but Xi understands that if China is truly to stand tall beside the United States, much more is required. China feels strongly that within the defense perimeters known as the first and second “island chains” (島鏈) it should be China that calls the shots.<sup>20</sup> Hence, the desire to establish a new type of great-power relationship with the United States, despite claims to support a harmonious relationship as partners (伙伴) with smaller and weaker neighbors: until China becomes a true maritime power, it will remain entangled in territorial and jurisdictional disputes in the surrounding seas. Once China has the capacity to

project the necessary maritime power, it will be possible to set aside the humiliating insults of the European empires—most notably those of the United Kingdom, Portugal, France, and Germany, which crushed the Qing Dynasty during the late nineteenth century—and the more recent domination by the United States. A confident China could then reconstitute its “natural” maritime regional preeminence. The Chinese fondly recall a time when the peaceful expeditionary voyages of Zheng He (鄭和) explored the Indian Ocean and the east coast of Africa (and, by some speculative accounts, even North America and Europe).<sup>21</sup> Naturally, this attitude troubles China’s neighbors. Vietnam has objected to China’s recent infiltration of oil rigs into the Vietnamese exclusive economic zone (EEZ), the Philippines is currently objecting to China’s building of airstrips on Johnson South Reef (now Island) in the SCS, and several countries were upset by China’s unilateral declaration of an air-defense identification zone in the ECS in 2013.

Second, for Xi Jinping, “China’s seas” represent, just as much as does the continental territory within the Great Wall, a fundamental interest of the Chinese people. China’s vast population and ever-growing economy depend on correspondingly huge quantities of raw materials, energy, and foodstuffs, much of which is imported; without securing its lines of supply, China cannot make progress with the many urgent challenges it faces at home and abroad. Since the mid-1990s China has been a net importer of energy, and more than 40 percent of its domestic demand now passes through strategic choke points, such as the SCS and the Strait of Malacca, the latter of which Beijing regards as being subject to U.S. influence and essentially under U.S. control.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, China will continue to need these imports despite projects intended to diversify its sources of supply, among the most ambitious of which is the “Myanmar Corridor” connecting Kolkata in India via Bangladesh and Burma (Myanmar) to Kunming and thence to the major cities of China. China’s vulnerability to disruption of its essential supply chains surely underlies its determination to be seen as a strong adversary in its maritime disputes with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Japan in the East and South China Seas (ESCS).

These same seas also play vital roles in feeding the Chinese people; for example, China is now becoming a major importer of wheat.<sup>23</sup> Some of the demand arises from the ability of newly wealthy Chinese to afford a better diet, but also there are a hundred million or more unregistered workers in central China who need to be fed.<sup>24</sup> China imports more than four-fifths of its soybeans, or about 60 percent of world production.<sup>25</sup> Besides the issue of import security, China sees its surrounding seas as a vast potential food-producing resource, where fish-farming and similar technologies could provide protein to replace the pigs, sheep, chickens, and geese that are collectively a major cause of desertification—

a recent destructive sandstorm extended as far as South Korea and parts of Japan. Since the turn of the century food imports have been increasing steadily, because yields of rice and corn have stagnated or diminished in most parts of China.<sup>26</sup> Thus China grows ever more dependent on the ESCS to feed its population, and hence the underlying significance of the slogan “A Strong China and the Chinese Dream.”

Third, this fifth generation of leaders of the People’s Republic of China, if they are facing internal dissent, may be adopting an ambitious maritime strategy in an attempt to legitimize the continuing rule of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Since 1989 there has been a worrisome trend of increasing opaqueness in the CCP, and Xi Jinping may be inclined to use the concept of maritime power to boost popular support for the regime. Certainly, there are signs of manipulation to that end. An example is the emphatic campaign of the Chinese media in support of China’s claim to the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands in the ECS; here it is clear that China’s pledge to build maritime power is exploiting nationalistic fervor to buttress the popularity of the CCP.<sup>27</sup>

Xi Jinping’s declaration of a new type of great-power relationship with the United States should be seen in a similar light. Rather surprisingly, the concept of reshaping China as a maritime power has been put forward not only by the Chinese government but by the CCP as well. In November 2012, at the eighteenth Communist Party Congress, Xi was eager to send a strong message, under the rubric of the Chinese Dream, on the issue of disputed waters, about which the CCP has grown increasingly outspoken. Becoming a true maritime power, as noted above, is closely linked with overcoming the humiliations inflicted on China by the West, and the associated surge in Chinese pride facilitates the declaration of a Chinese version of the Monroe Doctrine. It can be plausibly argued that the party’s slogans of “Strong China” and “Chinese Dream” are ultimately directed at squeezing the U.S. Navy out of East Asian seas.<sup>28</sup>

Fourth, since the reforms and 1978 “open door” policy of Deng Xiaoping (“paramount leader” 1978–92), China has learned some useful lessons from the West, especially from the United States. From the perspective of the Chinese leadership, the “hundreds of humiliations” suffered by the Qing Dynasty resulted from the “salami tactics” of Western imperialism.<sup>29</sup> China is now turning the tables, intending to slice off parts of the East Asian seas, bit by bit, until its neighbors have entirely accepted its naval power and influence. Still, Xi seems to be wondering whether China’s antiaccess and area-denial tactics are adequate to the task; the salami strategy will now be implemented through the application of a modern national maritime-security policy “one island chain at a time.”<sup>30</sup> In fact, after all that China has learned from the United States, it is hardly surprising

that Xi should declare the intention of developing maritime capacity to become a “true” maritime power commensurate with China’s geostrategic understanding and experience.

## THE NATURE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF XI’S TRUE MARITIME POWER

What Xi Jinping understands as “true maritime power” is intertwined with several complex issues, both internal factors about the legitimacy of Xi’s regime and external factors like territorial disputes in the ESCS that impact the sovereignty of the state.<sup>31</sup>

First, Xi Jinping wants China to be recognized as a responsible maritime stakeholder. To Western analysts Chinese maritime policy has long seemed disingenuous, intended primarily to disrupt the status quo in the East Asian seas, and during recent years Beijing’s assertive steps to pursue its historical maritime claims have generated alarm throughout Asia. Xi would very much like to change these perceptions of China, and since taking political and diplomatic charge in 2012 he has repeatedly suggested to President Barack Obama that a new type of great-power relationship should be established between their nations. The United States, he urges, should be more relaxed about the expression of Chinese sea power, at least in East Asia, and accept China as a true maritime power, perhaps as an emerging great power.<sup>32</sup>

During the last couple of decades, China has criticized U.S. forward deployment as reminiscent of the Cold War and designed to maintain American maritime hegemony through absolute sea control. Beijing perceives Washington’s policy as intended to contain China as a continental power and to prevent it from expanding its political and military influence to neighboring littoral countries. Such sentiments have apparently generated strong political support for the PLAN’s intention to build more aircraft carriers; *Liaoning*, a refurbished ex-Soviet vessel, has attracted some criticism for its limited functionality. But the fact that Chinese-built aircraft carriers are now an imminent reality reinforces Xi Jinping’s declaration that China should become a true maritime power and, at least in Chinese eyes, heralds the restoration of a traditional regional order that should be consolidated through a new type of great-power relationship with the United States.

In 2008 the PLAN dispatched its first-ever naval task force—comprising a Luyang II-class destroyer, Jiangkai II frigates, and a Fuji-class auxiliary—to the Indian Ocean to conduct antipiracy operations in the Gulf of Aden. This, as well as other contributions that China is starting to make to more general maritime cooperation, should be understood as demonstrating nonconfrontational intentions and as part of a quest to acquire status as a responsible maritime power. A

third of the world's trade passes through the Indian Ocean, and Chinese naval task units have twice conducted bilateral antipiracy naval operations with U.S. naval units in the Indian Ocean, in 2008 and 2013.<sup>33</sup> More significantly, the PLAN has overcome its long-standing reluctance to be involved in American-led multilateral naval exercises, sending four vessels to participate in the RIMPAC 2014 naval exercises, not to mention a spy vessel (which was allowed to operate unmolested in Hawaii's EEZ).<sup>34</sup>

Second, Xi Jinping wants to protect China's maritime security interests by all means available, and he is ready to apply whatever notions or frameworks suit his purpose, whatever their origin (for example, from Western imperial states) and whatever their international legal status. From Xi's perspective, China's maritime core national interests can be secured through exercising true maritime power in support of state sovereignty. China has categorically laid claim to several small islands in the East Asian seas that other countries—such as Japan, the Philippines, and Vietnam—have also claimed. It has provocatively cited its maritime territorial claims as “core national interests” and as an issue of territorial integrity comparable to its irredentist claims to Taiwan and Tibet.<sup>35</sup> Tension continues to increase in the ongoing maritime disputes with Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Brunei over territories in the SCS that Beijing referred to as of “core national interest” in March 2010. China is also confronting Japan (and potentially the United States) over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands in the ECS, which China officially declared as representing a “core national interest” in April 2013. The external threats being risked may be much smaller in scale than China faced during the Korean War and the 1979 Vietnam war, or even the Sino-Soviet border conflicts, but they have supplied a useful justification for developing an integrated defense capability.<sup>36</sup>

Third, Xi Jinping is trying to exploit constructive ambiguity to bolster China's historically based claims in disputed waters. Admiral Zheng He's fleet more than six centuries ago was the most magnificent the world had ever witnessed, but the current Chinese leadership would have us take two distinct messages from that story. The first and foremost of these messages is that the Middle Kingdom sea boundaries established during the Ming Dynasty should be seen as relevant for delineating modern-day boundaries. But it would also have us appreciate that Zheng He's voyages were economic and cultural, that he refrained from colonizing any of the weaker nations he visited, instead benignly establishing “harmonious seas” under the enlightened guidance of the Yongle emperor, Zhu Di. That is, China intends this historical narrative to remind its neighbors of China's overwhelming strength and historical presence throughout the regional seas, to assert China's rights to all the East Asian seas, and to propose an essentially new rule of law based on historical precedence—all considerably beyond what modern

international law and legal principles prescribe. This attitude is currently being energetically displayed in China's dispute with Japan over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands. But the same historical narrative is also adduced as evidence of Chinese restraint and implicit goodwill toward smaller, weaker nations that are content to go along with China's (supposedly benevolent) restoration of the Middle Kingdom maritime order.

In 1984, Deng Xiaoping suggested that all parties "set aside matters of sovereignty, implement joint development for mutual maritime interests, and leave other issues for subsequent generations." Xi Jinping is now doing his best to advance China's unilateral maritime claims while simultaneously preserving enough ambiguity to allow China's neighbors and other disputants to accept Deng's suggestion.<sup>37</sup> Each of these countries should carefully consider the implications of the China Coast Guard's present-day maritime law-enforcement operations, which are intended to establish a new methodology for defining sea boundaries before the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) has been implemented in the region.

Fourth, Xi Jinping is taking more care than his predecessors to avoid any expression of China's true maritime power that might be interpreted as a preemptive military strike and give rise to serious regional military escalation. He is anxious to avoid any direct U.S. involvement, as happened in the 1995–96 Taiwan Strait crisis. In line with Xi's desire that China be seen as an honest and responsible maritime power, Chinese forces seem to be adhering to several self-imposed principles—that is, rules of engagement—that appear in turn to be based on a "reactively assertive" maritime posture. Thus, China's historical maritime territorial claims are being protected by civilian maritime-security agencies rather than by military forces, which helps in keeping matters below the threshold of military confrontation.

So far, Xi Jinping has been careful in his management of regional maritime standoffs; in times of open tension, CCG vessels hold the first line of defense, with PLAN vessels staying in the background, and while the CCG may target adversary vessels in an asymmetric manner, it has done so in ways proportionate to the circumstances. Additionally, China also has other effective tools with which it can confront rival claimants to disputed maritime territories, including economic pressure and diplomatic leverage. Overall, Xi is playing a shrewdly judged game, hoping to avoid either, as noted, direct U.S. intervention or collective ASEAN opposition. At the strategic level, China denies any intention to use its naval forces to expel rival claimants, and its stance has been essentially defensive, without offensive or provocatively assertive measures.<sup>38</sup> In fact, China's insistence on becoming a true maritime power can be seen as a form of crisis management; the possibility of armed conflict in the ESCS cannot be discounted,

and the Chinese assessment of Asian maritime security recognizes the continuing instabilities. Nevertheless, if any of China's rivals were to act unilaterally in ways that proactively disrupted the status quo, especially were the United States to become involved as a consequence of its security alliances, China would likely retaliate in a disproportionately assertive manner.<sup>39</sup>

## IMPLEMENTING XI'S VISION OF CHINA AS A TRUE MARITIME POWER

The implementation of Xi Jinping's vision is very much a work in progress, but there seem to be four main thrusts: establishing new high-profile organizations dealing with maritime policy and strategy; upgrading naval capabilities to counter the U.S. pivot to Asia; enhancing maritime law-enforcement instruments to reframe the issues in East Asian seas away, as noted, from prevailing international law and toward China's view of rights as derived from historical precedent; and ostensibly demonstrating China's goodwill through participation in various regional forums, seminars, and exercises.

First, Xi Jinping appears to have obtained the general support from the party, the military, and the state necessary to consolidate his diplomatic and security authority. Diplomatically, his responsibility is to bring to fruition the existing policy of "peaceful rise," which means maintaining good relations with neighbors, including Japan, and the United States. In this context, China wants to be an active and competent stakeholder, and Xi has variously set up or taken charge of several authorities to deal with China's maritime issues. These include a small central policy body overseeing maritime interests, which has operated since 2012 but has not been formally activated. There is also the State Security Committee (國家安全委員會), which in 2013 became China's paramount national command authority, comprising civil servants and officers from the State Council (國務院) and the National Oceanic Council (國家海洋委員會), which in turn was established by the first plenary session of the twelfth National Party Congress in March 2013. The State Security Committee is particularly significant in that it is made up of China's highest military and civilian leaders, including senior generals and admirals, and councillors from the State Council, all of them party members. It seems to be the highest body dealing with maritime security issues that has ever reported directly to the Politburo Standing Committee, and it has taken over the function of the PLA-based Central Military Commission (中央軍事委員會) in dealing with theater crises and conflicts.<sup>40</sup> In July 2013 Xi also presided over a "Third Group Study" (集體) for the Political Bureau of the CCP, discussing the implementation of China's maritime power (就海洋強國研究). Also, in October 2013, he convened a high-level working conference on "peripheral diplomacy" (週邊外交工作座談會), to promote "good neighborliness



and friendship” to create a peaceful and stable regional environment. All of these bodies appear to be firmly under Xi’s control, but for some reason the National Oceanic Council has not yet been activated formally.<sup>41</sup>

Second, Xi is seeking much more than just the buttressing of Chinese power and influence around the Yellow Sea and the ESCS; he wants China’s naval capabilities to match or exceed those of its rivals in the region, the U.S. Navy and the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force. During the Cold War, Beijing often worried that American naval forces would intervene militarily in Chinese affairs, as Western forces had during the late nineteenth century and as, for example, powerful aircraft-carrier battle groups from the U.S. Navy’s Seventh Fleet did in the Taiwan crises of the 1950s and 1990s. This fear caused the PLAN to adopt a very defensive posture against the U.S. Navy’s forward-deployed forces based in Japan. Indeed, the PLAN assumed only a supporting role in strategic coastal defense, which was led by ground forces; it was generally understood during the Cold War that any response the PLAN might make to an intervention by the Seventh Fleet would be counterproductive and would simply expose its own weakness. The PLA was quite unable to come up with any viable solution to this problem, so the Chinese navy was limited to coastal-defense ships and conventional submarines, ceding to the U.S. Navy control over all the East Asian seas.

These days, however, the PLAN is no longer a mere theoretical power limited to the continental littoral, for China’s economic growth has supported the development of a considerable offensive oceangoing capacity with far-seas operational capabilities sustainable for long periods of time, with significant implications for China’s diplomatic and political stance. A process of reorganization is ongoing that seems to have resulted from Xi Jinping’s autumn 2013 directive to improve operational “agility” and develop combat “synergies” to deter new external threats on land and at sea.<sup>42</sup> It is for this reason that the refurbished *Liaoning* was commissioned in 2012, and indigenous carriers, which will surely be far more capable, are believed to be under construction.<sup>43</sup> Over the last few years, the PLAN has impressively expanded its naval fighting capabilities, with many new ship classes, great improvements in overall design, and much better sensors and weapons.

One of the newest surface combatant classes to enter service is the Luyang III (Type 052D) destroyer. On 21 March 2014 the first of ten, *Kunming*, was commissioned by the PLAN, with a multipurpose sixty-four-cell vertical-launch system that provides increased weapons stores and potential payload flexibility.<sup>44</sup> Such innovations are coming thick and fast these days. For example, the Jiangdao (Type 056)–class light frigate, at 1,440 tons, can be seen as the PLAN’s version of the U.S. Navy’s Littoral Combat Ship, for use in regional waters and for export to countries that do not have or cannot afford full-size frigates.<sup>45</sup> A mock-up

seen at the Wuhan University of Science and Technology has been reported as evidence that the PLAN is building a missile cruiser larger than any U.S. or Japanese analogue. Such a warship might be an air-defense ship intended to address the PLAN's weakness in sea-based missile capabilities and would be a significant addition to a Chinese carrier battle group.<sup>46</sup>

China's economic growth has driven four decades of progress, lately marked by seventeen straight years in which defense spending has increased by about 10 percent annually.<sup>47</sup> Successive PLAN task forces in the Indian Ocean, each comprising two large and sophisticated combat vessels and a large logistics vessel for replenishment at sea, have been deployed since December 2009, and in 2011 there was a successful evacuation of noncombatants during the Libyan crisis. For the Chinese this recalls Zheng He's fifteenth-century peaceful missions to the Gulf of Aden. Other significant deployments include scientific survey missions undertaken by *Liaoning* in the SCS in December 2013, during which its organic air wings demonstrated the ability to control the first island chain domain. More remarkably, PLAN marines deployed from their tropical bases in southern China for cold-weather training in the Chinese autonomous region of Inner Mongolia. This is an indication that the PLAN is getting ready for complex, composite naval warfare that might call for wider integration with the rest of the PLA to improve operational agility and develop combat synergies. It reflects the new roles and functions envisaged for the PLAN and its marines—they are preparing for a potential crisis in the ESCS and taking the opportunity to get practice with new doctrines and warfare manuals.<sup>48</sup>

There are other clear signs as well that the PLAN is successfully developing new missions and operational concepts. It conducted its largest joint fleet exercise ever in October 2013 in the Yellow Sea. This was a campaign-level scenario involving more than a hundred surface combatants and submarines from the North and East Sea Fleets, along with more than thirty aircraft, coastal missile, and other units. The exercise was designated by the PLAN as "an experiment in joint warfare with Chinese characteristics," designed to enhance commanders' joint warfare capabilities and prepare them to implement Xi Jinping's new naval doctrines.<sup>49</sup>

Third, Xi has restructured China's unwieldy civilian maritime law-enforcement apparatus to offer more options in territorial disputes with neighboring countries. The reputation of these civilian agencies has improved markedly; the CCG, for instance, has attracted media attention for playing a leading role in protecting China's legitimate maritime rights and interests. After the establishment of the central policy group already mentioned, which oversees maritime interests, and following the Third Group Study of the CCP, but before convening the National Party Congress session in March 2013, Xi Jinping revealed a plan to merge the

main maritime law-enforcement agencies. Four entities—the China Marine Surveillance, the old Coast Guard of the Ministry of Public Security, the Fishery Administration Service of the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Maritime Anti-smuggling Police, under the General Administrative Service of the Ministry of Customs—are being united to form a unified maritime law-enforcement agency, the China Coast Guard, with a function and mission similar to those of the U.S. Coast Guard.

There has been some international skepticism about this regrouping process, noting interagency friction and internal resistance to being merged into the CCG. Nevertheless, this reform appears to reflect Xi Jinping's desire to strengthen China's maritime capabilities at every level as part of the transformation of China into a true maritime power.<sup>50</sup> Guided by Xi's slogan of building a "Strong Nation" with a "Strong Navy," the ambitious structural reorganization that the CCG will require to be effective will deliver a single, unified maritime law-enforcement command-and-control structure capable of providing strong support for China's rights and interests in disputed waters.<sup>51</sup>

The CCG is an important tool in China's quest to establish sea boundaries on the basis of its historical presence in the East Asian seas.<sup>52</sup> The roles and missions of the CCG will assist China in asserting its territorial claims independently of the prevailing international law and legal principles, notably those of UNCLOS, which has been used to adjudicate a variety of other maritime disputes even though the United States has not ratified this convention, supposedly for national-security reasons. (In practice, the United States has so far abided by UNCLOS principles, but obviously this could become hostage to domestic politics at any time.) The capabilities and scalable force sizes of the CCG will constitute a significant challenge for China's neighbors, and perhaps some may reconsider the idea of a single principle to justify the legality of sea boundaries.<sup>53</sup>

Fourth, Xi Jinping is keen for China to engage actively in all kinds of international maritime interactions, including joint development projects, forums, seminars, and bilateral or multilateral naval exercises, and he will take advantage of every opportunity to represent China as an honest and responsible maritime stakeholder in East Asian seas. Its policy of peaceful rise attempts to project a peaceable and nonthreatening image while seeking to secure status as a great power under the slogan of "Strong Nation, Maritime Power, and the Chinese Dream." Zheng He has been a useful propaganda weapon in advancing maritime interests through "soft power." For instance, Xi Jinping promoted the concept of a "Maritime Silk Road for the 21st Century" as the Chinese vision for a networked relationship between China and ASEAN when visiting five of its member countries in October 2013. Just as Zheng He had a lasting impact on the countries he visited, Xi is seeking to build lasting connections between China and the

Southeast Asia nations, and he proposed extensive maritime cooperation with them. The Maritime Silk Road, a trade corridor extending from China to India via the SCS, was first introduced in a speech to the Indonesian parliament in 2013. In that speech Xi suggested improvements in maritime and port infrastructure along the sea route, such as upgrades to Malaysia's eastern port of Kuantan, for which two billion U.S. dollars in Chinese funds had been earmarked.<sup>54</sup> In a similar vein, at the fourteenth ASEAN-China Summit, in November 2011, China suggested setting up an ASEAN-China Maritime Cooperation Fund, amounting to three billion RMB (about U.S.\$473 million), to commemorate Zheng He's contributions to China's neighbors and partners, again an effort to enhance maritime connectivity with ASEAN.<sup>55</sup> Underlying Xi Jinping's charm offensive are some lessons rooted in the past; the burgeoning economic interaction between China and ASEAN is certainly one aspect of the restoration of China's great-power status, but it is also a means for Beijing to extend its political influence and expand trade volumes.<sup>56</sup>

In April 2014 there was another opportunity for China to show itself in a more positive light and encourage other nations to focus less on China as a threatening bully—the hosting of the 2014 International Fleet Review (IFR) and Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS), at Qingdao. A two-day multinational naval exercise, MARITIME COOPERATION 2014, held in the waters off Qingdao was mainly focused on joint search-and-rescue operations.<sup>57</sup> China had hosted the same events four years earlier, but the 2014 IFR commemorated the sixty-fifth anniversary of the PLAN's foundation, and the WPNS, a biennial forum for naval staff chiefs that now attracts representatives from twenty-five regional nations, had the theme of "Cooperation, Trust, and the Win-Win Spirit." These events comprised a multilateral workshop, symposium, and program of exercises that offered a chance for the crews of ships and aircraft from many navies, both friends and potential adversaries, to interact.

In hosting this IFR and the fourteenth WPNS, China was surely aiming to promote peace and stability in the western Pacific, but it was also seeking to improve its public image, damaged by the PLAN's calculated assertiveness toward smaller, weaker neighbors. For example, the events in Qingdao, oriented toward crisis management, provided a valuable opportunity for the Chinese to demonstrate their willingness to work for peace and cooperation and to present themselves as reasonable, rational actors in the context of these forums—even as China continues to ratchet up tension in the ESCS. The chiefs of naval staff at the WPNS endorsed a Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea (CUES), a protocol of safety procedures, communications, and maneuvering instructions that naval ships and aircraft should follow. CUES is not legally binding, but all participants were urged to implement its provisions in their operational manuals.<sup>58</sup>

The PLAN has submitted a preliminary application to host the 2024 WPNS meeting.<sup>59</sup> Multilateral forums like WPNS, which has twenty-one member countries and four observers, offer a useful political platform for China. Such extended diplomatic leverage allows Beijing to spread its influence and work to restore China's Middle Kingdom maritime prominence and simultaneously to reassure neighbors of its benign intentions.

## **XI JINPING'S COMMITMENT TO TRUE MARITIME POWER: IMPLICATIONS AND IMPACTS**

True maritime power, in Xi Jinping's conception and implementation, is clearly a multifaceted phenomenon. Much of the analysis from commentators outside China has been primarily concerned with negative interpretations and consequences: schizophrenic qualities, reactive assertiveness, tailored coercion, disproportionate retaliation. They also point out implications for crisis prevention in maritime territorial disputes and the delicate balance China is seeking between attaining declared core national interests in disputed waters and avoiding unacceptable diplomatic cost with respect to the United States.<sup>60</sup>

### ***Implications***

Xi Jinping appears more committed to a long-term maritime strategy than were his predecessors, but his current priority is the consolidation of true maritime-power status. As long as China's capabilities remain inferior to those of Japan (technologically) and the United States, it will be essential to avoid any serious military confrontation with these powers; similarly, it would be best not to provoke collective action by ASEAN, which might draw direct intervention by Washington.

Despite these constraints on broad unilateral actions, time is on China's side. China continues to modernize its naval forces. Meanwhile, although the U.S. military is attempting to rebalance its naval power to the Asia-Pacific, given financial sequestration it lacks the resources to do this quickly or effectively. In addition, U.S. forces are still engaged in other regions, like the chaotic Middle East, as well as lately in Europe, where Washington is acquiring new commitments to check Russia's westward advance through Ukraine. Thus, the American rebalance to the Asia-Pacific may be some time in coming and hard to implement, and in the meantime China can lean on its rivals in ESCS disputes as opportunity allows and slice the salami whenever it becomes possible.<sup>61</sup>

Since the informal summit meeting between Barack Obama and Xi Jinping in June 2013, and with the Chinese proposal for a new great-power relationship with the United States in the background, the two countries have gained clearer perspectives on what each requires of the other and what may and may not be possible. This clarity has effectively widened Xi Jinping's choices for unilateral

action on ESCS issues, and it helps make sense of his policy on maritime power—he expects U.S. influence in the region to continue to weaken.

The modernization of the PLAN, the restructured CCG, and the essentialist ideological stance China has adopted to validate its claims—for China's neighbors, things have already gone too far. The U.S. security commitment that has shielded them since 1945 is clearly becoming less effective. But even more seriously, the Chinese economy is so intimately integrated with the economies of all its neighbors, and also of the United States, that none of them can now afford to stand up to China—not even the United States can offer anything beyond token resistance. The reality is that China has already become too powerful militarily and too influential economically to be “dealt with” in any meaningful sense. The countries of the region, especially some of those with maritime disputes with China, are beginning to acknowledge this truth and to realize that in the longer term their only option may be to accommodate the wishes of the big boy on the block.

### *Impacts on the Region*

Xi Jinping's policy for China to establish itself as a true maritime power will likely have a serious impact on China's neighbors. Those nations that most cherish their ability to act independently will feel the greatest effect. Any that attempt to obstruct Xi Jinping's intentions will surely meet even sharper reactions than have been seen recently. China's ambition to become a true maritime power should not be seen in narrow terms, as simply an issue of a continental or a maritime perspective; the nations of the region must understand its real purpose, which is nothing less than the restoration of China's traditional maritime order. When the Middle Kingdom was the hegemon of East Asia, the surrounding seas constituted a medium through which its overwhelming power and influence were propagated throughout the region, together with Chinese attitudes and values. Xi Jinping will not be satisfied until this system has been re-created around modern China.

The true maritime power to which the Chinese aspire involves the strategic interconnection of land and sea power and the balance of short-term crisis management with long-term interest. In practical terms, it can be readily understood as a Chinese version of the Monroe Doctrine, which the United States declared in 1823 to deter the European great powers from interfering in seas that the United States construed as in its natural sphere of influence. Certainly, the current maritime policies being pursued by China are intended as warnings, especially to the United States and Japan, not to intervene in Chinese affairs in any part of the ESCS. They represent an implicit challenge to the collective defense posture encouraged by Washington, the self-appointed guardian of the Indo-Pacific region. It is easy to sympathize with the concerns of China's weak and vulnerable

neighbors, like South Korea and Vietnam, that well remember the bitter historical experience of living as tributary nations under the Middle Kingdom umbrella.<sup>62</sup>

Let us then examine some specific ways in which China's maritime ambitions are likely to affect the region significantly. First, Xi Jinping's attitude toward his less powerful neighbors seems to be hardening considerably. The region may face more unilaterally imposed restrictions and obstacles designed to establish, as "facts on the ground," legal and administrative structures inspired by China's historical presence in the East Asian seas. Examples include China's November 2013 declaration of an air-defense identification zone over the ECS and the announcement in January 2014 of new fishing regulations whereby the Chinese government, acting in the name of the province of Hainan, obliged all foreign fishing vessels to apply for permission before entering a vast swath of the SCS, including areas contested by Vietnam and the Philippines.<sup>63</sup>

Second, Xi Jinping is finding it harder to reconcile China's maritime interests harmoniously with those of other claimants in the ESCS. The Chinese are growing less willing to enter into substantive negotiations to resolve such differences and disagreements. The Chinese have refused to take part in the proceedings resulting from a four-thousand-page submission by the Philippines to the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague on 30 March 2014. The Philippines is seeking a definitive ruling on Chinese claims and activities in the South China Sea, China having asserted a historical right to over 90 percent of the SCS by its so-called nine-dashed line, which overlaps with about 80 percent of the Vietnamese claims.<sup>64</sup> On 1 May 2014 an oil-drilling rig belonging to the China National Offshore Oil Corporation was moved unilaterally into the Vietnamese EEZ, and the Chinese have expressed their determination to put it in operation, despite widespread rioting in Vietnam targeting Chinese-owned factories.<sup>65</sup> There is also an active dispute between China and the Philippines over the Second Thomas Shoal in the Spratly Islands, which is 105 nautical miles from the Philippines. Chinese actions there conflict with the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea, which calls for the maintenance of the status quo, and they are hindering efforts to draw up a binding Code of Conduct.<sup>66</sup>

Indeed, recent developments in the ESCS disputes have clearly demonstrated that China, ASEAN, and Japan are unable to agree on mechanisms to apply international law in the maritime domain. There is a little good news, however. China responded helpfully to the Typhoon Haiyan disaster in the Philippines in November 2013, though its initial pledge of only U.S.\$100,000 in aid to the Philippines attracted international criticism (in contrast, China had pledged U.S.\$1.5 million to its close ally Pakistan when an earthquake killed five hundred people there in September of that year).<sup>67</sup> China also proved willing to cooperate



with many other nations in the response to the mysterious disappearance of the Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 in March 2014.<sup>68</sup>

Third, Xi Jinping is making very clear that the United States can no longer continue to behave as if it were the only player in the game—those days are past. China is deliberately setting up confrontations by asserting “traditional historical rights,” and of course, the United States is resisting, but the U.S. commitment to allies and partners in the region has become ambiguous. As the struggle in the region between the two great powers becomes ever more open and obvious, the other regional powers, especially those that can be characterized as “middle powers”—ASEAN, Australia, Canada, India, Japan, and South Korea—are seeking to establish strategic cooperative partnerships and networks with one another.

Fourth, and relatedly, the other countries of the region are very sensibly fearful about Xi Jinping’s commitment to make China a true maritime power, since none has forces on the scale of the PLAN or much military leverage to resist expressions of Chinese will. The nations of the Indo-Pacific region can only band together, and of course, they have long been doing this through bilateral security arrangements with the United States, the guarantor of regional peace and stability since the Cold War ended. But times are changing, and although the United States has always tried to bind China to the maritime interests of its allies in the Indo-Pacific region, the lesser powers are now feeling much more exposed.

Fifth, despite all the talk of China’s core national interests, Xi Jinping has yet to issue any grand doctrine describing how the People’s Liberation Army should protect them. The PLA has had very little experience of conducting expeditionary joint campaigns, so some kind of guidance is needed, and of course, the rest of the world is concerned about the content of such a doctrine as well. The U.S. “Weinberger Doctrine” of the 1980s and the later “Powell Doctrine” are the best examples of such protocols. But until the Chinese issue such an explicit declaration, we will be left with the ambiguities of Xi Jinping’s salami slicing and what appears to be a Chinese version of the Monroe Doctrine.

#### A MIDDLE KINGDOM REGIONAL ORDER?

Xi Jinping’s declared intention that China become a “true maritime power” is meant to secure China’s maritime domain, but it is also part of a balanced national strategy in which inherently military affairs are interwoven with strategic issues of sovereignty, regime legitimacy, and major-power politics. Xi’s commitments on maritime policy go substantially beyond any of his predecessors’, and an impressive modernization and reorganization of the PLAN and the CCG is under way. China, then, is preparing for conflict, should conflict come, but it is also pursuing a shrewdly balanced strategy that maximizes ambiguity. It is maneuvering stealthily to realize its objectives incrementally in the disputed waters

of the East and South China Seas without provoking effective reaction from the United States.

None of China's neighbors in the Asia-Pacific region can match its maritime capabilities on an individual basis, but the United States continues to argue that by acting together they can form a credible counterweight against China. One of the principal aims of President Obama's April/May 2014 visit to Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines was to shore up support for the U.S.-led maritime security coalition. The United States continues to urge China's neighbors to work together to respond to China's long-term strategy and to do everything possible, without escalating maritime tensions, to prevent China from establishing a fait accompli by which the Middle Kingdom regional order would be restored.

But time and circumstance are on China's side, and a war-weary United States is unwilling to chance any serious maritime confrontation with it. From an East Asian perspective, the U.S. security umbrella is starting to leak. The only practical alternative for China's neighbors is to reorganize their collective security in terms of a cooperative enterprise among particular emerging middle powers, for which South Korea, Australia, India, and ASEAN are the most plausible candidates. Of course, the Chinese would surely try to use their economic leverage to discourage such cooperation, and the very idea that China can be influenced by any kind of collective pressure may underestimate its resolve.

So where does this leave us? Throughout the region there is an earnest desire to believe that China really does want to be a responsible player, that it wishes to maintain maritime peace and stability. We can only hope for greater Chinese restraint in the use of "tailored coercion" and "forceful persuasion." Xi Jinping's control of several high-profile maritime committees can be seen as a strategy of crisis management, and there is now at least a policy to avoid the use of naval warships for law enforcement in disputed waters. Nevertheless, and unpalatable as it seems, accommodation of China's aspirations may ultimately be the lesser evil.

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## NOTES

1. For the intellectual sources of the Chinese Dream, see Senior Col. Liu Ming-fu, *Chinese Dream* (Beijing: China Friendship, 2010). For Xi's strategic thinking, see Mia Li and Amy Qin, "Strong Military Called Centerpiece of 'Chinese Dream,'" *International Herald Tribune*, 15–16 December 2012, pp. 1, 4. The term "maritime power" is interchangeable with "maritime state." Continental and

maritime powers utilize their capacities in different ways according to the general national and strategic characteristics that define the state, including geographic, political, economic, sociocultural, and military factors. The use of the term "true" implies something more than a mere passive facticity—it suggests an active plan to produce some kind of significant transformation.

2. Toshi Yoshihara and James R. Holmes, *Red Star over the Pacific* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2010), esp. chap. 2.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
4. James R. Holmes and Toshi Yoshihara, "China's Navy: A Turn to Corbett?," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings* (December 2011), pp. 42–46; Holmes and Yoshihara, "Hardly the First Time," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings* (April 2013), pp. 22–27.
5. Andrew J. Nathan and Robert S. Ross, *The Great Wall and the Empty Fortress: China's Search for Security* (London: W. W. Norton, 1997).
6. Historically, "maritime power" has referred straightforwardly to the exercise of absolute seaborne power as a strategy to secure a nation's goals and interests, whether through sea control or sea denial. In modern usage, however, maritime power has taken on a broader meaning that includes a variety of more qualitative values, such as peace and stability. The orthodox ideas of maritime power were primarily concerned with geography, whereas the modern understanding takes more account of maintaining peace and good order at sea through maritime cooperation.
7. Nathan and Ross, *Great Wall and the Empty Fortress*; Bernard D. Cole, *The Great Wall at Sea: China's Navy Enters the Twenty-First Century* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2001); Cole, *Asian Maritime Strategies: Navigating Troubled Water* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2013).
8. Of the world's busiest ports, thirteen are located on China's east coast. Victor L. Vescovo, "Deterring the Dragon . . . from (under) the Sea," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings* (February 2014), p. 55.
9. "Xi Advocates Efforts to Boost China's Maritime Power," Xinhua, 31 July 2013, news.xinhuanet.com/.
10. Capt. R. B. Watts, U.S. Coast Guard, "The End of Sea Power," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings* (September 2009), pp. 23–26.
11. There are many reasons for the PLAN to acquire aircraft carriers: to realize organic air-defense/offense capability, to project naval power from the sea, to obtain command of the sea, to protect strategic nuclear-powered submarines, and to serve as substitutes for overseas bases.
12. Ian Storey, "China's Malacca Dilemma," Jamestown Foundation *China Brief* 6, no. 8 (12 April 2006), www.jamestown.org/.
13. The author is grateful to anonymous manuscript referees for pointing this out.
14. For Xi Jinping's acknowledgment, "China Firm in Its Resolve to Build Sea Power," *People's Daily Online*, 27 August 2014, available at www.globalsecurity.org/.
15. Paul Kennedy, "The Rise and Fall of Navies," *New York Times*, 5 April 2007; Geoffrey Till, *Seapower* (London: Frank Cass, 2003).
16. Cho Youngnam, "China's Diplomatic Challenges and Prospect in the Xi Jinping Era," *Strategy 21* 17, no. 1 (Summer 2014), pp. 16–17.
17. The author thanks Dr. Parris H. Chang for this information.
18. Yoshihara and Holmes, *Red Star over the Pacific*, p. 16.
19. "Hu Calls for Efforts to Build China into Maritime Power," Xinhua, 8 November 2012, news.xinhuanet.com/.
20. The first island chain is generally considered to run from the Kamchatka Peninsula through the Kurils, the Japanese home islands, the Ryukyus, Formosa, the northern Philippines, and Borneo to the Malay Peninsula. The second, farther east, is understood to extend from Honshu to New Guinea through the Bonins, Marianas, and Carolines.
21. Vijay Sakhuja, *Asian Maritime Power in the 21st Century: Strategic Transactions; China, India and Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2011).
22. As the world's biggest oil importer, China imported in 2013 a net average of 6.2 million barrels per day. See "China," *U.S. Energy Information Administration*, 4 March 2014, www.eia.gov/.
23. Nat Rudarakanchana, "China Absorbs Wheat: Imports Skyrocket 5000% for December 2013," *International Business Times*, 4 February 2014, www.ibtimes.com/.
24. Diana Choyleva, "China's Economic Dead End," *Wall Street Journal*, 7–9 December 2012, p. 11.

25. Nicholas Thomas, "Going Out: China's Food Security from Southeast Asia," *Pacific Review* 26, no. 5 (December 2013), p. 531.
26. Monika Barthwal-Datta, *Food Security in Asia: Challenges, Policies and Implications* (London: Routledge for International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2014), pp. 54–55.
27. Such heated nationalism is symptomatic of a profound irredentist desire to restore the maritime territories China lost after the collapse of the Qing Dynasty in the early twentieth century.
28. The concept of a Chinese version of the Monroe Doctrine has received some support in the United States, but it has also been challenged by analysts from the United States, India, and Japan. See Sukjoon Yoon, "The Emergence and Consolidation of a Chinese Version of the Monroe Doctrine: Implications for Korea's China Policy," in "Comprehensive Security in Northeast Asia I: Maritime Security," special issue, *KAS Journal on Contemporary Korean Affairs* (1/2013); Sukjoon Yoon, *Xi Jinping's "Monroe Doctrine": Rebuilding the Middle Kingdom Order?*, RSIS Commentary 102/2014 (Singapore: S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies [hereafter RSIS], 29 May 2014); and Kai He and Huiyun Feng, *Rethinking China's Monroe Doctrine*, RSIS Commentary 128/2014 (Singapore: RSIS, 4 July 2014).
29. "Salami tactics," also known as "salami-slice strategies," involve a divide-and-conquer process of threats and alliances to overcome opposition. By this means an aggressor can influence and eventually dominate a landscape, typically through politics, piece by piece; the opposition is reduced "slice by slice" until it realizes (too late) that it has been entirely neutralized.
30. In 2003 China announced a long-term national maritime security policy, and in 2013 it proclaimed the creation of the National Oceanic Council to oversee its implementation. Many commentators on China believe, however, that the council is actually a dummy organization, for organizational convenience, and that its work will be taken over by the newly established State Security Committee.
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32. Philip C. Saunders, "China's Juggling Act: Beijing Balances Stability, Territorial Claims," *Defense News*, 14 April 2014, p. 21; Ely Ratner, *(Re)Defining the "New Type of Major Country Relationship" between the United States and China*, PacNet 4 (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies [hereafter CSIS], 13 January 2014).
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35. Michael Richardson, "China's Troubling Core Interests," *Japan Times*, 26 April 2013.
36. China's core national interests have been explicitly connected to the Tibet, Xinjiang, and Taiwan issues, and since 2012 this concept has been expanded to encompass the ESCS, so that external issues concerning China's smaller and weaker neighbors have effectively been recast as internal issues. China has eight neighbors on the ESCS and the Yellow Sea.
37. "China Voices Building China into Maritime Power Essential for Future Development," *Xinhua*, 14 November 2012, [news.xinhuanet.com/](http://news.xinhuanet.com/).
38. "New Vitality in Peripheral Diplomacy," *China Daily*, 23 September 2014, [www.chinadaily.com.cn/](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/).
39. You Ji, *Policy Brief*.
40. On 3 December 2013, Lt. Gen. Ren Haiqun, vice president of the Chinese Academy of Military Science, made this clear in a speech at the welcome dinner of the Beijing conference of the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific in Beijing.
41. President Xi Jinping also presides over six crisis-response policy-coordination groups: the Central National Security Council (中央國家安全委員會), the Central Network Security and Intelligence Group (中央新網安全 and 情報化領導小組), the Central Comprehensive Reform Group (全面深化改革小組), the National Defense and Military Leadership Reform Group (中國國防和軍隊改革深化領導小組), the Taiwan Affairs Group (臺灣業務領導小組), and the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Group (香港澳門業務領導小組).

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45. Dale C. Rielage, "Parsing the Chinese Challenge," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings* 139 (September 2013), pp. 59–62.
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# THE JMSDF'S RESILIENT POWER FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

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## Lessons from the Great East Japan Earthquake

*Captain Takuya Shimodaira, Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force*

**T**he Asia-Pacific is a disaster-prone region. In humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR) operations, it is crucial to save lives at the outset. Success in the initial phase will produce trustful relationships among civil and military actors and will influence subsequent relief operations.

Soon after Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) struck the central Philippines on 8 November 2013, the United States dispatched an aircraft carrier and conducted Operation DAMAYAN.<sup>1</sup> Dr. Patrick Cronin, senior director of the Asia-Pacific Security Program at the Center for a New American Security, wrote, “The response to Haiyan could be a turning point for the United States in Asia, an opportunity to re-up the pivot.”<sup>2</sup>

*Captain Shimodaira is the first Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) Liaison Officer assigned as an International Fellow in the International Programs Department at the Naval War College. He graduated from the National Defense Academy in 1989 and was commissioned as a Surface Warfare Officer, subsequently serving on board a number of destroyers, including command of JS Ishikari (DE 226). He took part in RIMPAC 2010, when the JMSDF joined that multilateral exercise for the first time, and served as Chief of Staff, Escort Flotilla 1 during Operation TOMODACHI. He earned an MA in area studies (East Asia, China) from the University of Tsukuba and a PhD in political science from the Kokushikan University, in Tokyo, where his research interests included nontraditional security.*

Japan too sent a relief force to the devastated area, marking Japan's largest international disaster-relief mission to date. It readily brings to mind Operation TOMODACHI, after the Great East Japan Earthquake (GEJE) of 11 March 2011. The response to the GEJE showed the utility of integrating diverse coalitions. The deep alliance between the United States and Japan was the main pillar of this coalition. *Tomodachi* means “close friends, trusting each other”; Japan and the United States can shape a more peaceful future and maintain peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region as the strongest possible allies and *tomodachi*. President Barack Obama declared in the 2014 State of the



Union address his intention to continue to focus on the Asia-Pacific, support American allies, and work toward a future of greater security and prosperity.<sup>3</sup> What kind of power should the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) exercise to shoulder an assertive role in shaping such a future alongside the United States?

One of the most important lessons learned from the GEJE is the importance of smooth coordination with local people to judge needs onsite.<sup>4</sup> To deal with an unprecedented disaster, governmental and nongovernmental actors must make good use of their own and each other's strengths. For the JMSDF, it is necessary to establish a trustful relationship with the local people if it is to meet onsite needs in an appropriate and timely manner.

In the Asia-Pacific region, multilateral cooperation in dealing with frequent major natural disasters is indispensable. One of the most important kinds of security operations that the JMSDF can perform now is HA/DR, in which saving lives from the sea in the initial phase is critical. The JMSDF can contribute to the establishment of trust among the nations of the Asia-Pacific region through the manner in which it makes available its knowledge and capabilities.<sup>5</sup>

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and the roles that they are expected to play have attracted new attention. A large number of the volunteers who worked vigorously to rescue and support disaster victims immediately in the wake of the GEJE were from NGOs. In fact, the total number of volunteers registered at volunteer centers exceeded 767,000 in the six months following the disaster.<sup>6</sup> In addition to sending volunteers, NGOs provided a wide range of services, from delivering relief supplies to providing health care.

Although humanitarian assistance has traditionally been carried out by civilian organizations, in recent years military organizations have placed more weight on HA/DR. As a result, the activities of military and civilian organizations now often overlap or compete with each other during HA/DR, causing confusion about who is responsible for coordination. Professor Peter D. Feaver of Duke University argues that there is a latent gap between civil and military organizations, one that is difficult to fill even by building a good civil-military relationship.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, a large-scale HA/DR operation necessarily requires unified effort and a whole-of-government approach; this gap must somehow be overcome.

First, this article analyzes onsite coordination during Operation TOMODACHI among the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps and the JMSDF and describes the strengths provided by the JMSDF. Next, it reviews the activities of NGOs in the response to the GEJE. Last, it explores the resilience and robustness of the JMSDF's power for connecting civil and military organizations in the Asia-Pacific region.

The author joined Operation TOMODACHI on board the state-of-the-art helicopter destroyer JS *Hyuga* (DDH 181) as chief of staff of JMSDF Escort Flotilla 1 and was responsible for coordinating Japanese-U.S. joint operations in the afflicted areas. These observations and recommendations are based on successes and difficulties experienced during the operation onsite.

## OVERVIEW OF OPERATION TOMODACHI

An enormous earthquake and tsunami devastated the Tohoku region of northeastern Japan on 11 March 2011, a combined disaster since referred to as the “Great East Japan Earthquake.” In response to the GEJE, Japan’s Self-Defense Force (SDF) quickly went into action, deploying forty naval vessels and approximately three hundred aircraft. Early the following morning, JMSDF units reached a position off Miyagi Prefecture and started search-and-rescue operations. On 14 March Joint Task Force–Tohoku (JTF-TH) was formed; the SDF provided more than a hundred thousand personnel until the task force’s dissolution on 1 July. JTF-TH controlled at the maximum five divisions and four brigades (about forty-five thousand ground personnel); fifty vessels and 172 naval aircraft (about fourteen thousand maritime personnel); and 240 other aircraft (about twenty-one thousand air personnel). The results of its activities over three months were that 19,286 lives were saved, 9,500 remains were found, 23,370 were provided medical assistance, 4,709,019 meals were served, 32,985 tons of water were supplied, bathing assistance was rendered to 966,436 people, and other support, including debris removal from public facilities, bridge reconstruction, and temporary housing, was provided.<sup>8</sup>

Meanwhile, the U.S. Navy promptly responded to a request of assistance, deploying eight naval vessels, including the aircraft carrier USS *Ronald Reagan* (CVN 76). They arrived off Miyagi Prefecture before dawn on 13 March, and started Operation TOMODACHI. At its peak the United States deployed approximately twenty naval vessels, about 160 aircraft, and over twenty thousand personnel.<sup>9</sup> Helicopters of both the JMSDF and U.S. Navy transported water, food, and blankets from JS *Hyuga* and the supply vessel JS *Tokiwa* (AOE 423) to playgrounds and other places in Miyagi and Iwate Prefectures. By 20 March, ten days since the earthquake, the needs of the afflicted areas were shifting to livelihood support. The USS *Essex* (LHD 2) Amphibious Ready Group, with the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, arrived off Aomori Prefecture and began to provide relief supplies in support of Operation TOMODACHI in cooperation with the SDF, the Japan Coast Guard, the National Police Agency, and fire authorities. U.S. forces assigned to Operation TOMODACHI shipped approximately 280 tons of food, 7.7 million liters of water, forty-five thousand liters of fuel, and approximately 3,100 tons of other items.<sup>10</sup> On 1 May, after making this enormous contribution, the

United States terminated the operation, although maintaining a quick-reaction capability. The significance of this deployment and its unprecedented scale are particularly worthy of discussion.

JMSDF and U.S. forces expeditiously deployed to the disaster site in full strength almost immediately after the disaster and displayed to the world a high level of interoperability. Then–Defense Minister Yoshimi Kitazawa evaluated their interaction as a symbol of the “deepening of the Japan-U.S. alliance.”<sup>11</sup> In addition to the support received from the United States, Japan received help in the form of supplies and relief funds from various other nations. In return for the help that was given to Japan in a time of critical need, the JMSDF must do whatever it can in future disasters elsewhere.

### THE JMSDF’S STRONG HA/DR CAPABILITIES

What is required immediately after any disaster is devotion of all efforts to search and rescue. Next, it becomes necessary to understand in detail the situation in the afflicted area to plan the transportation of relief supplies. In view of the characteristics of naval power, access from the sea can be expected to achieve great results.

#### *Sea Base*

The main characteristic of the GEJE was that the devastation was spread along an extensive coastline, the degree of damage suffered and type of support required varying according to the area. A large volume of floating debris made it difficult to approach the coast and caused great confusion. Particularly at first, helicopters and landing craft offer highly effective ways to reach isolated coastal areas, such as the tips of peninsulas and isolated islands.

The response to such a situation must be comprehensive. The JMSDF can provide an effective sea base for onsite, well-coordinated operations involving the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force and the Japan Air Self-Defense Force and effective utilization of the capabilities of U.S. forces. This coordination can take into account the relationship with the Japan Coast Guard, the police, and prefectural headquarters for disaster countermeasures.

JS *Hyuga*, with its extensive command-and-control (C2) and air-base capabilities, was fully utilized on the scene. Naval forces have good capabilities for searching isolated afflicted areas in detail, collecting information, searching for and rescuing castaways at sea, transporting relief supplies to a wide area, and analyzing and evaluating the extent of damage. In selecting the types of support required in specific locations, it is necessary to grasp accurately the people’s needs in the afflicted areas, always keeping in mind the need to maintain the effectiveness of forces and discern the content of support required. As the necessity of the civil-military cooperation in peacetime tends to increase, the JMSDF, which

operates at the frontline in noncombat operations, must focus deliberately on coordination with local governments, international organizations, and NGOs.

### *Command and Control*

Because the initial actions after any disaster are most important, the JMSDF and U.S. Navy exploited their characteristics for swiftness and mobility when the GEJE occurred. They made preparations rapidly for collecting information and responded at full power. In the HA/DR operations that followed it was necessary to maximize C2.

The needs in afflicted areas change. Search and rescue for the missing is prioritized for about three days after a disaster, at which point transportation of relief supplies is prioritized until about one week after the occurrence; then the priority shifts particularly to the restoration of lifelines and life support for isolated victims. Moreover, reconstruction assistance begins about one week after the disaster and becomes full-blown when about two weeks have passed. It is of utmost importance to discern the timing of changes in needs.

It is also essential for the JMSDF to utilize the capabilities of JS *Hyuga*—and also JS *Ise*, of the same class—in cooperation with the U.S. Navy, to the maximum extent. It is necessary to consider not only efficient operations of forces but also smooth coordination for supply and repair. In addition, it is necessary to design a cycle in which forces may be added and changed continuously, with timing that meets the needs in the afflicted areas. It is indispensable for the JMSDF and U.S. Navy to devise a concept, based on common background and high C2 capability, that maintains a common operational picture.

It is also important to hold video teleconferences and exchange liaison officers to enhance the effectiveness of the operational cycle. Such a coordination process has been established through exercises in the past few years, and communications on-scene have been sufficient. However, there has been no opportunity to practice interactions among the whole of government.

In the end, the principal arena of HA/DR is on the land. The characteristics of ground, maritime, and air forces and of their operating environments are different. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct exercises in advance.

### *Onsite-centricity: Information Superiority*

Humanitarian assistance / disaster relief has basically the same operational cycle as combat operations. “Victims’ needs on the scene” is equivalent to “movement of the enemy” and is a core factor of the operational cycle.

For the U.S. Navy, information is always the center of the operation cycle. U.S. personnel first transported water and emergency food to the afflicted areas, and every time they did so they directly asked victims for input or conducted questionnaire surveys. Then they addressed these needs in their next assistance

actions. This process is equivalent to the analysis of information on the enemy. The JMSDF also conducted search and rescue of the missing immediately after the disaster, as well as the provision of water, food, and blankets, and it coordinated with the U.S. Navy activities such as assistance in bathing.

In such activity it is important to distribute appropriate information to alleviate the anxiety not only of victims but of the entire nation and to minimize confusion, taking into account the almost total lack of information in the afflicted areas immediately after the occurrence of a disaster. It is also necessary to consider the points for distributing and replenishing accumulated relief supplies and replacing perishable items that become outdated. It is important to share and coordinate such information and activities to respond to the people's needs in the afflicted areas swiftly and accurately.

The cooperation between the JMSDF and the U.S. Navy is becoming more and more important, in ways depending on the characteristics of areas where they operate. Each individual SDF and U.S. unit needs to coordinate in a way that contributes to the overall objective by taking advantage of their characteristics and maximizing their capabilities. Using the lessons learned from the past, the JMSDF has been aware that disaster response has three steps: initial search-and-rescue stage, life assistance, and reconstruction assistance stage. Although it is difficult to define standards for transitioning to each next step, decision to take specific actions can always be made onsite in the afflicted areas.

#### NGO ACTIVITIES DURING THE GEJE AND THE JMSDF

Japan Platform (JPF), an international humanitarian-assistance organization founded jointly by a number of NGOs, the government of Japan, and the Japanese business community, played a significant role in making up for the loss of local government functions during the GEJE.<sup>12</sup> It created a mechanism that allowed for the prompt and effective delivery of assistance to disaster victims by connecting local governments, administrative agencies, private corporations, NGOs, and other entities with the needs of the people in the disaster-affected areas. NGOs played a big role in this mechanism, acting as the coordinating authority.

The day after the disaster occurred, JPF immediately activated a partnership with other NGOs. Civic Force, a professional and leading disaster-relief organization, sent helicopters to the disaster-affected areas for situational awareness. Thereafter NGOs, led by JPF, jointly undertook a great many relief tasks, such as distributing supplies, preparing meals, and managing volunteer centers.<sup>13</sup>

What follows is a review of the major activities that were carried out by NGOs in response to the GEJE in the categories of relief supplies, volunteers, and health care. The article will then propose a possible relationship between the JMSDF

and NGOs, a concept based on the interview with the chairman and founder of Civic Force, Kensuke Onishi.

### *Delivering Relief Supplies*

ADRA Japan, a “specified nonprofit corporation” (as defined in Japanese law) based on the Christian faith, carries out its activities cooperatively on an international basis with the aim of restoring and maintaining human dignity around the world.<sup>14</sup>

ADRA Japan implemented six projects totaling about ¥954 million in the response to the GEJE, which was its largest undertaking since its founding. In its initial response ADRA supported the provision of meals for about a hundred persons in Yamamoto-cho, Miyagi Prefecture, including the personnel of the disaster-response office. It thereafter supplied daily necessities to 4,320 affected households in Matsuyama City, Miyagi Prefecture, and 26,683 households in nine municipalities that included Tamura City, Fukushima Prefecture. It also supplied necessities to elementary, junior high, and senior high schools in Fukushima Prefecture, including bicycles and school uniforms. For 1,030 households accommodated in temporary dwellings in Yamamoto-cho the organization ascertained and monitored needs to help build a framework and community for mutual assistance.

Transportation is essential for accomplishing the delivery of these supplies. A private company, Takahashi Helicopter Service K.K., joined hands with Civic Force to build a transportation system through a public-private partnership that would directly respond to calls for help from disaster sites. Some local governments suffered damage and temporarily lost their ability to function; NGOs provided support for them, as well as supplying what was needed in the affected areas. The use of private helicopter-service companies like Takahashi K.K. was a significant example of flexibility by the local government and businesses.

Parties that are supposed to provide disaster relief—the central government, local governments, large corporations, small and medium-sized enterprises, and NGOs—have different tasks that they perform depending on circumstances. It is therefore important to build relationships among all these parties in advance to share their knowledge and experiences for future disaster response.

Kensuke Onishi argues that Civic Force can be used as a main resource to gather emergency supplies instead of the JMSDF, because Civic Force has the knowledge, experience, and platforms to gather information, manpower, funds, and resources in an organized manner. Civic Force has contracted with the business community—almost a thousand corporations in Japan that can provide various kinds of goods, clothes, and shelters—and puts its skills into practice almost every year.<sup>15</sup> As one of the most recognized and professional NGOs, Civic Force

has a profound and unique knowledge base and extensive experience and capability. The JMSDF should recognize the professionalism of NGOs, especially their knowledge about the *gemba* (“at the site”), and produce more plans to coordinate with private entities to maximize the capabilities of both.

### *Sending Volunteers*

Since the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake of January 1995, the Peace Boat Disaster Relief Volunteer Center (PBV), a “general incorporated association” (again, a category defined by Japan’s legal framework), has been engaged in carrying out emergency relief activities in areas affected by natural disasters. PBV has provided assistance all around the world: after earthquakes in Turkey, Taiwan, Pakistan, Niigata, and China (the province of Sichuan); the large tsunami that hit Sri Lanka in 2004; and Hurricane Katrina, which struck the United States.<sup>16</sup>

On the basis of the experience that it has accumulated sending disaster-relief volunteers and engaging in international relief operations, PBV was able to organize a large volunteer group immediately after the occurrence of the GEJE. PBV sent volunteers to Ishinomaki City, in Miyagi Prefecture, and other affected areas to perform such relief activities as preparing meals, removing dirt, distributing supplies, and supporting evacuation centers. As PBV accepted volunteers from foreign countries and businesses in addition to Japanese citizens, it was able to assign about two hundred volunteers per day to carry out a variety of assistance tasks according to ever-changing local needs. As an organization that participates in cross-border disaster-relief operations, PBV has accepted and organized more than four hundred volunteers from about fifty countries around the world.

Civic Force too, Kensuke Onishi has pointed out, can send emergency-response teams, led by professionals trained for and accustomed to disaster environments, assess relief needs, and, drawing on its wealth of knowledge and experience, conduct effective and prompt disaster relief.<sup>17</sup>

The JMSDF should cooperate with NGOs in ways that make the most of each organization’s capability in order to focus on the people’s needs. To do this, the JMSDF should use professional NGOs to acquire immediate situational awareness by sending emergency-response teams who know the environment.

### *Providing Health Care*

SHARE—Services for the Health in Asian & African Regions—was founded as a specified nonprofit corporation in 1983 by physicians, nurses, and students who started with grassroots activities.<sup>18</sup> With the goal of creating a society where everybody can live a healthy life in both mind and body, SHARE has been offering health care in Thailand, Cambodia, East Timor, South Africa, and Japan.

After the GEJE, SHARE provided emergency assistance in Natori City, Miyagi Prefecture, and then carried out health-care support activities in Kesenuma



City, mainly by visiting disaster-affected residences, evacuation centers, and temporary dwellings, and providing health consultations to victims.

In late March, the Kesennuma Traveling Care Support Team was formed, with the cooperation of local doctors and nursing staff, as well as medical support staff from outside Miyagi Prefecture. SHARE participated in its health-consultation section and engaged in various activities such as visiting disaster victims still in their homes, especially elderly people and mothers with little children, to confirm their safety and condition and to provide health consultations, notify them that they could receive medical checkups for infants, and support home-based care. In June, the team started visiting disaster victims in temporary dwellings and small evacuation centers. The team recorded the information obtained through such visits and shared data regarding safety and health problems with local government officials and health-care providers in Kesennuma City.

Charity Platform, a specified nonprofit corporation, is headed by Ms. Hiroe Murakami, who has been engaged in clinical psychology as her lifework and who has provided mental-care support in relation to child rearing since becoming a representative of a nonprofit organization, the Mental Support Network, in March 2008.<sup>19</sup> When the GEJE occurred, Charity Platform supported mental care for mothers raising children in Fukushima Prefecture, provided a communication network connecting more than six thousand NGOs nationwide, and served as a bridge between more than 250 corporations and the NGOs that receive donations from them.

Kensuke Onishi is convinced that cooperation between the JMSDF and NGOs can produce good results. By leaving the private sector to lead the relief response to the people, the JMSDF will escape from unnecessary burdens, connect with other parts of the private sector, and receive international official-development-assistance funding through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In the future, Civic Force will pursue the idea of using temporary hospital ships, as a cooperative effort involving merchant ships and the JMSDF.<sup>20</sup>

#### THE JMSDF'S RESILIENT POWER IN CONJUNCTION WITH NGOS

The damage caused by the GEJE was unprecedented for Japan, but looking outside that country we can see that emergencies of the same magnitude happen in many places around the world. At the same time, since experiencing the GEJE, international Japanese NGOs that once focused on developing countries have been directing their attention to domestic needs. Thus, NGO activities have become more multidirectional. The foundation of Japan Platform has produced a framework for united emergency assistance whereby NGOs, the business community, and the government of Japan work in close cooperation, making the most of the respective sectors' characteristics and resources.

The JMSDF should give serious consideration to building a partnership with NGOs that play important roles in emergency assistance and have strong capabilities for HA/DR so as to gain a public understanding with and among them. The most critical issue is how to coordinate all these entities. Further, a question is being raised that affects the very *raison d'être* of the JMSDF: How will the JMSDF be able to exercise and use its capabilities in an emergency in which central or local governments are unable to function? It will do so by means of its resilient power with respect to civil society.

Its first task is to enhance trust. It is important to make the most of the JMSDF's strong capabilities at scenes of devastation. Its capabilities and achievements have for almost seventy years produced trust among the Japanese people. It is expected to fill the gap between the civil and military sectors. Both civil and military organizations answer to the same code—that is, saving people comes first. Civil-military cooperation is an essential factor for coordinating each kind of power to save more lives. There are both possibilities and limitations with respect to civil-military cooperation. It is easy for civil and military organizations to cooperate for a limited time and in a specific place, especially in the initial phase, but such cooperation is usually more complex if it must be ongoing and widespread.

An example of good civil-military coordination was seen after the Sumatra earthquake in 2004.<sup>21</sup> As the disaster area where HA/DR operations needed to be performed was difficult to reach, civil organizations had to rely on military transportation. At such a time a cooperative relationship can be established easily between civil and military organizations. Furthermore, if the operational framework is simple, it is relatively easy to build a structure that is beneficial to both civil and military organizations. Training and exercises that include civil and military organizations will enhance trust.

Second, the JMSDF must revitalize “multi-actors.” The JMSDF has an excellent command-and-control capability for smooth HA/DR operations. It is necessary, however, for the JMSDF, the U.S. Navy, and NGOs to aim at improving their efficiency when available resources are limited. One important lesson learned from the GEJE is that Japan should be prepared for unexpected or unintended events. For its part, the JMSDF must posture itself to take on tasks and issues that are outside initial planning or beyond the scope of available capabilities. Therefore, it is important for the JMSDF to join in as soon as it can, dispatch wherever it can, and do whatever it can on a voluntary basis, especially in the initial phase. Once the initial quick response has been provided, a coordinating system should be established immediately. Specifically, by putting “multi-actors” together to build a powerful C2 center capable of coordinating HA/DR operations, it is possible to

make more organizations available than needed and thereby to pursue extensive and multilevel response measures.

### UNPRECEDENTED DISASTERS, UNPRECEDENTED RESPONSES

When an unprecedentedly large-scale disaster occurs, a response should be made with the united efforts of the whole country. Should a disaster more devastating than the Great East Japan Earthquake ever happen, even more assistance would be needed than was available then. The basic principle of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief is to “provide the necessary assistance to those who need it”;<sup>22</sup> obviously, this cannot be achieved solely by the JMSDF, and it is not a task that is imposed solely on the JMSDF. In the future, NGOs and private corporations, which have unlimited potential, are expected to introduce new possibilities in the field of HA/DR; NGOs, thanks to their diversity, will play significant roles in interconnecting organizations involved in HA/DR.

A relationship among the JMSDF, the U.S. Navy, and NGOs in HA/DR is beneficial in the sense that NGOs overcome a gap between the private sector and the military sector and work together in the disaster area. It is essential for civil and military organizations to share their roles flexibly, depending on the time, place, and capabilities, so as to ascertain the changing needs onsite accurately and bring to bear efficiently the maximum effect of the united efforts of the whole of the government.

The primary task expected of the JMSDF is to exercise the full power that it has cultivated over a long period. In essence, it is an offshore platform. For the future, it is necessary to pursue a collaboration with the Asia Pacific Alliance for Disaster Management, an organization aimed at building frameworks wherein, when large-scale disasters take place within the Asia-Pacific region, private corporations, NGOs, and government agencies of the countries and territories concerned collaborate beyond organizational boundaries to share and use resources—personnel, goods, money, and information—to provide assistance quickly and effectively.<sup>23</sup> The keys to increasing the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance and disaster reliefs are training and exercising in a real environment.

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# MENTORING IN THE U.S. NAVY

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## Experiences and Attitudes of Senior Navy Personnel

*W. Brad Johnson and Gene R. Andersen*

**T**he first operational definition of mentoring in organizations—offered by Kathy Kram in 1985—proposed that mentoring relationships facilitate an individual's professional development through two distinct categories of “mentoring functions.”<sup>1</sup> Career functions included sponsorship, exposure and visibility, coaching, protection, and provision of challenging assignments. Psychosocial functions included role modeling, acceptance and confirmation, counseling,

*Dr. Johnson is professor of psychology in the Department of Leadership, Ethics, and Law at the U.S. Naval Academy and a Faculty Associate in the Graduate School of Education at Johns Hopkins University. A clinical psychologist and former lieutenant commander in the U.S. Navy Medical Service Corps, he served as a psychologist at Bethesda Naval Hospital and at the Medical Clinic at Pearl Harbor. Dr. Johnson is the author of numerous publications, including twelve books, in the areas of mentoring, professional ethics, and counseling, including most recently The Oxford Handbook of Education and Training in Professional Psychology (2014).*

*Professor Andersen is associate professor of Leadership Education in the College of Operational and Strategic Leadership at the Naval War College. A retired naval aviator and Naval Academy graduate holding a master of arts in national security and strategic studies (with distinction) from the Naval War College, he teaches courses and directed research in leadership and ethics. He is author or coauthor of several articles and coeditor of two collections used as texts at the Naval Academy.*

and friendship. Considerable empirical evidence tends to support the importance of both career and psychosocial components to good mentorship.<sup>2</sup> Mentorships in any organizational environment tend to share the following characteristics: positive emotional valence, increasing mutuality, a range of career and psychosocial functions, an intentional focus on the development of the mentee's career and professional identity, and a generative interest on the part of the mentor in passing along a professional legacy.<sup>3</sup> Excellent mentors are intentional about the mentor role. They select mentees thoughtfully, invest significant time and energy getting to know their mentees, and deliberately offer the career and support functions most relevant to their mentees' unique developmental needs.<sup>4</sup>

Deliberate mentorship features prominently in the Navy's recently released Leader Development Strategy, a common framework for leader

development Navy-wide.<sup>5</sup> The strategy recognizes that people constitute the Navy's most valuable strategic asset and that deliberate development of individual sailors and officers must become a top priority. Although mentoring is infused throughout the four core elements of the strategy (experience, education, training, and personal development), it is most explicit in the fourth element: "Personal development . . . includes performance evaluation, coaching, counseling, and mentoring."<sup>6</sup> The architects of this Leader Development Strategy make it clear that effective mentor-leaders focus attention on the individual development of junior personnel.

In a 2010 article in the *Naval War College Review*, we summarized the empirical evidence lending strong support to the benefits of mentoring relationships for junior persons fortunate enough to experience them in any organizational context.<sup>7</sup> An updated review confirms that mentoring matters. Hundreds of rigorous studies, meta-analyses, and other quantitative reviews make it clear that those who report having been mentored accrue a number of reliable benefits in comparison with those not mentored.<sup>8</sup> Across disciplines and organizations, mentoring is consistently associated with greater work satisfaction and performance, higher retention, better physical health and self-esteem, positive work relationships, stronger organizational commitment, career motivation, professional competence, and career recognition and success.<sup>9</sup>

Mentoring in the military is no exception.<sup>10</sup> The few existing studies on the prevalence and efficacy of mentorship among active-duty personnel reveal that having a mentor while in uniform tends to bolster satisfaction with one's military career, provides a range of important career and psychosocial advantages, and heightens the probability that mentored service members will in turn mentor others themselves. In spite of these findings, the term "mentoring" tends to evoke a range of reactions among service members today. There are many factors at play here. These include miscommunications caused by conflicting definitions of mentoring, formal mentoring programs that are sometimes perceived as onerous administrative burdens (versus culturally accepted and integrated mechanisms for developing junior personnel), and lingering perceptions among some that mentoring connotes favoritism and unfair advantage.<sup>11</sup> There is also some evidence that although military personnel want and value mentorships, they resist any program that attempts to legislate or formalize relationships.<sup>12</sup>

It is easy to appreciate the Navy's quandary with regard to formal mentoring programs. On one hand, there is considerable evidence that *informal mentorships* (those that emerge naturally through mutual initiation and ongoing interaction, free of external intervention or planning) result in stronger outcomes for mentees than are found for mentees *formally assigned* to mentors.<sup>13</sup> In most organizational contexts, both mentors and mentees appear to seek out mentorship matches on

the basis of similarities, shared interests, and frequent positive interactions. Two scholars in this field, Belle Ragins and John Cotton, have nicely described the sometimes-unconscious process at work in senior personnel as they gravitate toward junior members of the organization: “Informal mentoring relationships develop on the basis of mutual identification and the fulfillment of career needs. Mentors select protégés who are viewed as younger versions of themselves, and the relationship provides mentors with a sense of generativity or contribution to future generations.”<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless, there appear to be problems associated with compelling people to participate in mentorships. In light of the well-documented success of informal mentoring in the business world, many organizations—including the U.S. military—have moved to formalize the process. Planned and instigated by organizations, formal mentoring programs involve some process for matching or assigning dyads as well as some level of subsequent oversight and evaluation.<sup>15</sup> In contrast to informal mentorships, formalized relationships tend to be somewhat less emotionally intense, more visible within the organization, focused on specific developmental goals, and confined to predetermined periods of time.<sup>16</sup>

From these findings, it is easy to conclude that organizations should let nature take its course when it comes to mentoring, hoping that enough informal mentorships will evolve to meet the needs of junior personnel. But here is the rub: when an organization relies exclusively on chemistry and the informal connections that may develop between junior and senior personnel, fewer mentorships develop. That is, organizations that create some structure for facilitating mentor-mentee matches have more junior members of the community getting mentored. Of course, the best structure for a specific organization may not include a broad mandatory program; at times, voluntary programs and initiatives to stimulate and reward good mentoring are the best fit.

In an earlier article, we highlighted several lingering questions about mentoring in the military. One of these is the question of the perceived value of both mentoring generally and formalized mentoring programs specifically among leaders in the fleet. Although the recent Leader Development Strategy indicates attention to mentorship at the highest levels of Navy leadership, we wondered how “deck plate” officers and senior enlisted perceive mentoring in the Navy.<sup>17</sup>

## THE NAVAL WAR COLLEGE MENTORING STUDY

In light of the relatively sparse evidence illuminating mentoring in the U.S. Navy, and in an effort to assess the attitudes of officers and senior enlisted regarding formal mentoring programs, we conducted a multimethod study of mentoring among 149 Navy personnel attending senior leadership courses at the Naval War College (fifty-five officers, ninety-four senior enlisted). All study participants consented to taking part. Participants were enrolled, variously, in four



professional development courses: the Command Master Chief / Chief of the Boat Course (CMC/COB,  $n = 9$ ); the Senior Enlisted Academy course (SEA,  $n = 85$ ); Command Leadership School (CLS,  $n = 32$ ); or the Maritime Staff Operators Course (MSOC,  $n = 23$ ). Participants responded to a brief, four-page survey requesting demographic data, experience relative to mentoring in the fleet, and perspectives on mentoring programs in the Navy. A smaller sample of participants was randomly selected for participation in four course-specific focus groups on the topic of mentoring in the Navy.

Among the 149 participants, twelve were women. The mean age was forty years, and the average length of naval service was twenty years. Self-reported ethnicities were 110 white (75.3 percent), nineteen black (13 percent), ten Hispanic (6.8 percent), and five Native American / Pacific Islander (3.4 percent). Eighty-five percent of enlisted participants were either E-8 or E-9 (that is, senior chief or master chief petty officer), while 89 percent of officers were of the pay grades O-4 to O-6 (lieutenant commander to captain). Using a five-point scale (1 = Extremely Dissatisfied, 5 = Extremely Satisfied), we asked the participants to rate their overall level of satisfaction with their Navy careers. The mean satisfaction rating was 4.6 (enlisted = 4.7, officer = 4.5).

A full 91 percent of our sample reported having had at least one significant mentor during their Navy careers (enlisted = 94.7 percent, officer = 85.5 percent). On average, participants reported 3.5 important mentors during their naval careers. By and large, mentors had been men (95 percent) and in nearly all cases had been older than participants (91.2 percent), by an average of nine years. Ninety-three percent of mentors had been senior naval officers, and a full 81 percent had been in participants' chains of command. Strikingly, a full 55 percent of officer participants reported that their primary mentors had been their commanding officers; this was true for only 1.2 percent of enlisted participants. On average, participants reported that their primary mentorships in the Navy had lasted for 4.7 years.

One section of the survey inquired about who had initiated the mentorship, followed by a narrative question asking those participants who had had primary mentors to "describe how the mentor relationship began." On the issue of relationship initiation, most indicated that the relationship had been initiated by the mentors (49.3 percent). Representative narrative responses include the following: "My mentor identified me as someone with potential and engaged in providing me advice and counseling. Once initiated, I felt comfortable seeking advice as I faced challenges"; "He asked me about my goals, gave me direction on a daily basis, let me know my strengths and weaknesses"; "My mentor took an interest in me. He saw potential and helped me to see it"; and "I was required to return to a different career field and this person took an interest in me. He

formally trained me, took ownership, and followed up with calls and emails on a regular basis.”

In other cases, the relationship was mutually initiated (32.8 percent): “Ours was a senior/subordinate relationship involving mutual interests, career and personal goals”; and “I was the Captain’s aide and after a few weeks in that capacity, a mentorship developed. I still seek his advice 6 years after that job ended.”

In a smaller proportion of cases, mentorships were initiated primarily by the mentee (14.2 percent): “I recognized this person as an example of what I wanted to become. He displayed my goals. All I had to do at that point was ask him to be my mentor”; “I asked for guidance on how to broaden my horizons. I kept going to him when I no longer felt challenged and needed something new”; and “I sought him out through informal talking and asking selection board questions.”

Only 3.7 percent of our participants indicated that the mentor-mentee match had been formed in the context of a formal mentoring program. These findings suggest that in 82 percent of all mentorships reported by participants, the relationships had been initiated primarily as a result of the mentors’ interest in and attention to the mentees.

We asked our participants to rate their level of agreement (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree) with the proposition that several specific mentoring functions had been evident in their primary mentorships. We list the functions in the table by strength of participant endorsement:

Mentor Function	Mean
Advocated on my behalf	4.57
Developed my military skills	4.55
Enhanced my military career development	4.46
Offered me acceptance, support, and encouragement	4.45
Provided direct training or instruction	4.17
Increased my self-esteem	4.15
Increased my visibility/exposure within the Navy	4.14
Enhanced my creativity and problem-solving skills	3.96
Developed my personal ethics and professional values	3.83
Provided emotional support/counseling	3.82
Assisted in establishing professional networks	3.77
Served to protect me	3.64
Provided me opportunities (choice assignments)	3.50
Helped me bypass bureaucracy	3.03

These results indicate that excellent mentors in the fleet are active and deliberate in the roles of advocate, teacher/trainer, and career adviser. Moreover, mentors are consistently viewed as providing the personal acceptance, support, and encouragement that bolster the professional self-esteem of mentees. The fact that helping mentees bypass bureaucracy or obtain choice assignments are the mentor functions least frequently endorsed suggests that the perception of mentoring as mere favoritism, creating unfair privilege for a few, is not prevalent in the Navy.

To amplify further the behaviors of effective mentors, we asked mentored participants to respond to the following question: "Please describe an *event* or *experience* from the mentoring relationship which best illustrates how you benefited from being mentored." Responses fell into several consistent categories, including imparting wisdom/perspective, career advocacy / exposure / challenge, personal counsel, support during adversity, and provision of a model/exemplar.

Responses illustrating the value of a mentor imparting wisdom in the form of a long-term view of one's naval career included these: "My mentor helped me learn to think strategically regarding the development of my career. She guided me into a course of instruction to help ensure future success in the Navy"; "My mentor gave me a glimpse of the road or path that I needed to take to achieve my personal and professional goals"; "He discussed a future job that I was not interested in but my community had offered me. His long term view helped direct my course"; "My mentor took an active role in ensuring that I chose a follow-on assignment that was conducive to career development"; and "He assisted me by guiding me to college and definitely changed my decision-making process."

One of the most prevalent response categories highlighted the value of mentor advocacy, exposure, and challenge: "I didn't fully understand what I was capable of. My mentor assigned me to a job that was out of my area of expertise and challenged me to get out of my comfort zone. Through this experience I learned another critical component of my duties and it made me an expert outside my field—I still have that confidence to tackle the jobs that I haven't already mastered"; "My mentor gave me a chance to demonstrate what I could do, then put his money where his mouth was by writing a strong recommendation letter to the screening board that got me selected"; "He pushed me to take challenging job assignments. Some of the assignments were given to me without me having to ask for them"; "He recognized my abilities, pushed for recognition of my achievements and was instrumental in getting me the jobs I needed for career progression"; "Multiple times, when a high visibility problem came up, he would pick me to go with him to fix it. The amount of experience and recognition he provided is unmeasurable"; and "My mentor exposed me to a network of senior leaders and encouraged me to pursue more senior positions and get out of my normal comfort zone."

Personal counseling and support constituted a third category of participants' reflection regarding their mentors' most salient mentoring behaviors: "I had a hard time adjusting to the Navy because I had been discriminated against on a constant basis. He showed me how to adapt"; "My mentor spent numerous hours guiding me on handling personal issues, keeping perspective, and problem-solving work relationship issues"; "She offered me acceptance, support, and encouragement"; "When I was going through a personal crisis about my career, he took the time to listen and give me honest and thorough advice"; "He was there for me personally when I went through a tough divorce"; "He has a way of helping me work through an issue and eventually lead me to the answers I already had for myself"; and "My mentor taught me to control my emotions and self-reflect to be more aware of my surroundings and how to be a professional."

Related to personal counsel was a category of responses specifically reflecting on the value of the mentor's support and encouragement during moments of great professional difficulty: "I was passed over for promotion. Interaction with my mentor provided the support and recommendations needed to improve my chances for the next look, resulting in promotion"; and "When I wasn't selected for O-5, my mentor provided the coaching and visibility needed to successfully select in the next cycle."

A final category of participants' responses to our query about salient examples of their mentors' behavior in the mentoring role had to do with the value of a powerful role model and professional exemplar: "My mentor (the CO [commanding officer]) led by example. His work ethic and leadership were worthy of emulation"; "He used his prior mistakes and experiences to give me food for thought"; "I had the opportunity to accompany this officer as part of a small team conducting an investigation, during which I had an opportunity to observe and learn about his approach to leadership, ethics, and professionalism in a very concentrated manner"; "He taught me how to be a better sailor, I wanted to emulate him"; and "I was always yelling at subordinates. He sat me down and told me how to treat people, but more than that, he showed me by his example."

When we asked our officers and senior enlisted personnel to provide overall assessments of how important their primary mentor relationships had been to them both professionally and personally, the results were striking. Using the same five-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree), mean ratings for professionally important (4.7) and personally important (4.4) were quite high and similar for officers and enlisted. Moreover, our participants strongly endorsed the value of mentoring for the Navy. When asked, "Overall, how important is effective mentoring to the development of future Navy leaders?" (1 = Not Important, 5 = Extremely Important), the mean rating for enlisted was 4.8 and for officers, 4.5.

We also asked our participants whether they had served as mentors to junior members of the naval service. A full 95 percent indicated they had mentored, on average, twenty individual mentees during their naval careers.

A final item included on our survey was this: "Many Navy commands now have formal mentor-protégé matching programs. In your experience, how successful are these programs?" On a five-point scale ranging from 1 (Not Successful) to 5 (Extremely Successful), the mean rating was 2.5 (enlisted = 2.33, officer = 2.8), indicating that formal matching efforts tended to be viewed as somewhat unsuccessful. The survey then solicited narrative responses regarding why formal mentoring programs should or should not be incorporated into the Navy's plan for the development and training of future leaders. Among officers, twenty-eight of fifty-two narrative responses were negative regarding the value of formal programs, while thirteen responses were positive; the rest were neutral in valence. Among enlisted participants, fifty-four of eighty-six narrative responses were negative, fifteen were positive, and the remainder were neutral. In light of the similarity of the comments, we combined the groups in the following categorization of narrative themes. Among the comparatively small number of positive comments, the following themes were salient.

***Mentoring Prevents Junior Personnel from Getting Overlooked.*** "There are a lot of lost sailors, too many of them fall through the cracks because they did not get the proper mentoring"; "With today's new recruits, they need to have the guidance to ensure they are directed in their careers; Sailors need a 'sea daddy' to keep them on track and let them know when they have gone off it!"; and "Formal programs are especially useful for junior enlisted personnel who might otherwise be overlooked or forgotten."

***Mentoring Is Critical for Career Development.*** "A formal program could ensure that others receive the same benefit that I received, I can honestly say that I would not be where I am today without the mentorship I received"; "These programs help sailors understand the long-term consequences of actions and inactions"; and "Formal programs will mostly help convince those who would not ordinarily seek out mentoring that they can benefit from it. A mentor can teach a sailor from his/her experiences therefore eliminating the trial and error aspect, allowing fewer mistakes and more efficient learning."

***Formal Programs Hold Leaders Accountable.*** "I think formal programs should be incorporated because it will hold senior leaders accountable for actions or lack thereof"; "Formal programs are necessary to jump start mentoring throughout the various Navy communities"; "It is probably good to have formal programs, but if leaders were doing their jobs well, mentoring would be inherent in the

current process”; and “This should be force fed because some people won’t take care of their sailors.”

***Mentoring Is Crucial for Retention.*** “One word, ‘retention!’”; “These programs offer a sound basis for developing better sailors for the future of the Navy”; “In order for us to maintain, sustain, and continue to be the best, we must invest wisely in our future”; and “Mentorship is important for development of future leaders.”

The majority of narrative comments expressed strong concern about the rationale, utility, and long-term value of formally assigned mentorships. As in the case of the positive themes, we identified four salient negative themes in participants’ responses. We list the four themes below with a representative sample of participant comments.

***Not All Senior Personnel Make Effective Mentors.*** “Quite frankly, some people should not be mentors and to force them into a mentorship is absolutely ludicrous”; “Formal programs would force officers unsuited for mentorship into that job”; “Mentoring programs are promising but not everyone is qualified to be a mentor”; and “Not everyone is or could be a mentor and they should be identified through a vetting process. Formal programs will make people mentors who do not even care. Assigning the wrong person deters sailors from seeking good mentoring matches in the future.”

***Forcing Matches Undermines the Value of Mentoring.*** “A formal program is not required, if people aren’t inclined to mentor on their own, the value of the mentorship won’t be that high”; “The chain of command—when functioning properly—already provides formal mentoring”; “Like a forced marriage (formal) versus a traditional marriage (couple decides)”; “To force something on someone is rarely effective”; “You cannot fabricate a relationship between two people”; “If you make it an instruction, it loses the spirit and value of old fashioned mentoring”; “Forcing mentorship in any organization will result in poor quality”; and “Mentorship should be encouraged by leadership, initiated by seniors, but never forced on juniors. Some individuals do not want and will not benefit from a formal program.”

***Quality Mentoring Hinges on the Perception of Choice.*** “A mentor chooses you or you choose a mentor, if you assign them you end up with pairs that have nothing in common or don’t even like each other”; “I should choose who I want to emulate, don’t choose for me!”; “Formal programs fail because it is difficult to match mentors and protégés of similar mind and temperament—often the relationship is more meaningful and lasts longer if they find each other naturally”; “Nothing beats finding a mentor you connect with personally”; “If there is a specific formula that successfully promotes mentoring, I don’t think it has been discovered

—mentoring involves chemistry, not a formal assignment”; and “A mentor needs to be someone a particular sailor looks up to, respects, and admires.”

*Formalizing Mentorship Creates an Onerous Administrative Burden.* “Formal programs translate into more busy work without achieving the goal”; “I believe formal programs are disingenuous and often only a paper chase”; “A formal program would add an administrative burden and create a ‘not my job’ scenario because some senior people would then have the excuse, ‘I’m not his assigned mentor’ and blow off their jobs as leaders, educators, and mentors”; “This program will be a paper tiger”; “Just because it’s on paper doesn’t mean that real mentoring is occurring”; “I am skeptical of a big Navy program to enforce something as personal as mentoring”; “Formal program = check-in-the-box mentality”; “Now, the program will be inspected during inspection visits and lead to gundecking [falsifying results]”; and “Two words—paper drill.”

To understand more fully the experiences of participants with formal mentoring programs in the Navy, we conducted four focus groups with volunteers from the four leadership training courses mentioned earlier. Focus groups ranged in size from eight to twenty-three, and the duration of sessions ranged from forty minutes to one hour. The primary question posed to each group was: “Are formal mentoring programs (programs that involve matching mentors with mentees) a good idea for the Navy? Why or why not?” In most cases, our participants reflected on this question through the prisms of their own experiences with formal mentoring programs in the fleet. One member of the interview team took verbatim notes of the interviews. Participant responses were later grouped according to theme. Once again, negative comments tended to outnumber by far comments affirming a formal program.

On the positive side, focus-group participants emphasized that they highly value the concept of mentorship (“The concept of mentoring is as popular and patriotic as motherhood and apple pie. Everyone likes it and understands in a fundamental way what it is”) and many believed that the Navy already has a culture that values mentorship (“We already do have some culture of mentoring . . . why not just improve that culture without coming up with an instruction?”). Some recommended that merely reinforcing excellent mentoring might be preferable to legislating it (“Drive it into the culture by rewarding and reinforcing it. Mention it on the fitrep [fitness report], ‘is a good mentor.’ Reemphasize it at various training and education waypoints along the way in one’s career”). Several were adamant that mentorship should be nested under the umbrella of leadership and the general leadership expectations of all officers and senior enlisted personnel. (“Chiefs have been mentoring for years—it’s leadership, not mentoring. When you make mentoring management and not leadership, you have



problems”; “Mentoring is good, but mandatory mentoring is a crutch for commands with weak cultures of development”; “In my last command, we scrapped the formal mentorship program and made it the responsibility of the chiefs and division officers to get the deck plate leadership done”).

Finally, there was a perception by a few participants that formal mentoring programs were intended specifically for minority-group sailors: “The proposed instruction makes it sound like we should focus on minority groups, which suggests that this is another equal opportunity program”; and “This is never clearly addressed by any instruction but there is a strong implication that you should be mentoring minority sailors or women to enhance diversity.”

The majority of our focus-group participants acknowledged that any formalized mentoring program is likely to meet with resistance (“As soon as you say ‘mentoring’ you get a big sigh and resistance”; “If the Navy program is purely programmatic, not authentic, and if you force pairings, that is a recipe for disaster”; “Don’t create something that 95% of leadership disagrees with!”; “Nobody thinks mentoring should be formalized”). They further emphasized that any formal program is quickly perceived as onerous in the fleet (“When folks in the fleet hear they are going to be held accountable for mentoring then it gets oppressive and people don’t do it for the right reasons”; “Oh gee whiz, another program, another three-ring binder, another report to generate that someone may or may not read”; “I was mentorship coordinator on a carrier, we had an actual form that both [mentor and mentee] had to sign that included the date and time we met each week. Nobody liked the mechanistic, mandatory aspect”).

As in the narrative survey responses, our focus-group participants were cognizant of the problem inherent in the assumption that anyone can mentor effectively (“Some make good mentors and some don’t have what it takes to be effective in this role. It’s the same with selecting sponsors in a command. You want your best reps to do that. We need to do the same with mentors, pick your very best people and put them in the mentor role”; “I’m sorry, but there are some folks I don’t want talking to our junior guys”). Several indicated that mentor training should be a paramount concern (“Lack of training for mentors is a real problem. People need to be prepared for mentoring, this is a barrier to effectiveness”; “We don’t understand the complexity of mentorship. We don’t take time to train people”). One area in which training deficits created problems was failure to balance one’s mentoring and gatekeeping or enforcement roles with mentees appropriately (“These programs can undermine trust when a ‘mentor’ reports significant concerns about a mentee up the chain of command. In my command, this resulted in separation from the Navy for one sailor”). Balancing multiple roles with mentees may require a specific skill set and training for competence in the mentor role.

Focus-group participants also identified the need for “big Navy” flexibility and tolerance for the unique incarnations of mentoring programs in specific communities: “The cookie-cutter approach won’t work with the different communities and ranks. Tailor the program so that each command can use its structure and strengths”; “The question is how can various commands go about mentoring informally so that everyone has the opportunity for mentoring.”

A final theme had to do with concerns about assessing mentoring in the fleet. Some participants were concerned that the “need” for mentoring programs had not been established (“Why are we doing this? Is it really needed? Did anyone check to find out how much mentoring is going on without a formal program?”). Others noted the difficulty inherent in evaluating unique outcomes associated with mentoring programs (“Mentoring outcomes are hard to measure. Many things contribute to success, mentoring is just one element”).

### INTENTIONAL AND PROACTIVE MENTORS

This is the first empirical snapshot of mentoring in the U.S. Navy since the proliferation of compulsory matching programs nearly a decade ago. Within our sample of senior enlisted and midgrade officers, 91 percent reported having had at least one significant mentor during their careers in the Navy. On average, participants reported three significant mentorships. These numbers are consistent with data from retired flag officers.<sup>18</sup> As in previous studies of mentoring in the Navy, participants in our study reported that their primary mentors had been crucial for them both personally and professionally; they overwhelmingly endorsed quality mentoring as of critical importance for the future of the Navy. A full 95 percent of our participants were already active mentors themselves, counting on average twenty mentees during their careers thus far.

In the vast majority of mentor relationships, the mentor himself or herself had been instrumental in initiating the relationship. In approximately half of cases, the mentor had been the primary initiator, while an additional one-third of relationships had resulted from mutual interest and initiation. The fact that senior enlisted and commissioned mentors had been instrumental in launching 82 percent of the mentoring relationships reported by our participants is striking. With only 3.7 percent of mentorships born of formal mentoring programs, these data suggest that Navy leaders are intentional and proactive when it comes to reaching out to junior personnel and instigating meaningful mentoring relationships. It is particularly noteworthy that more than half of the officers in our sample reported that their own commanding officers had become their most significant career mentors.

What do effective mentors “do”? Participants in this study reported that strong advocacy, direct instruction and development of military skills, career guidance,

acceptance, support, and encouragement all loomed large among the most important mentor functions. Reports of salient mentoring experiences confirmed these ratings. Participants recalled examples illustrating the value of imparting real-world wisdom, career advocacy, exposure and visibility within the community, personal counsel, challenge, and deliberate role modeling. In contrast, our mentees were least likely to report that protection, help in bypassing the normal channels, or preference for choice assignments had been important elements of the mentorship. This evidence seems to refute concerns that mentoring is equated with special privilege and unfair advantage in the military.<sup>19</sup>

The most important contribution of this study was a multimethod exploration of participants' perceptions of the value of formalized mentoring programs in the fleet. Overall, both officers and senior enlisted participants were between neutral and somewhat negative in their assessments of formal mentor-mentee programs—particularly those that are mandatory. Both survey and focus-group responses consistently raised concerns about the practice of requiring all senior personnel to mentor. Experience suggests that not everyone has the interpersonal and technical competence to serve effectively in the mentor role. Moreover, our participants expressed concern that marginal or incompetent mentorship may do more harm than good. Forcing sailors to participate in assigned mentorships—particularly in the absence of a thoughtful and participatory matching process—was seen as quite misguided. Because perceptions of choice loom large in determining whether any relationship is likely to succeed, participants were concerned about haphazard or superficial approaches to the pairing of mentors and mentees. Finally, study participants were loud and clear in their objections to any directive that burdened commands with yet another paper chase to be scrutinized during inspections. As others have warned, mandatory formal programs run the risk of undermining the joy and motivation associated with giving to the next generation, through the art of mentorship.<sup>20</sup>

On the basis of the foregoing results, we offer the following recommendations for consideration by Navy leaders. First, it is imperative that the Navy fully implement its Leader Development Strategy, specifically core element number four, personal development. This element focuses attention on individual strengths and weaknesses, personal reflection, evaluation, and growth in the context of competent coaching and mentoring relationships with senior personnel. Judging from the results of this study, mentoring is already taking place in the fleet for many officers and enlisted personnel, and our sample rated mentoring as exceptionally important for the future of the Navy. The challenge in the future will be to increase attention to mentoring as a salient leader competence.

Second, we recommend that local commanding officers approach formal mentoring programs thoughtfully, always with attention to the desired outcomes

and structures that best align with the current command culture. In our previous explorations of mentorship in the military, we have cautioned against programs for programs' sakes and instead have encouraged leaders to enhance the culture of mentoring and the preparedness and commitment of personnel to mentor.<sup>21</sup> So, rather than formal programs with mandatory matching of mentors and protégés, leaders might explore voluntary traditional one-to-one matching programs, "team mentoring" structures in which a "master mentor" meets routinely with a small cohort of protégés, and "mentoring constellations" in which personnel are coached and mentored to create effective networks of career helpers—both inside and external to the command. The key is that some vision for what mentoring can and should achieve drive the development of a mentoring structure.

Third, members of our sample were quite clear in their assessment that not all senior Navy personnel are likely to be effective in the mentor role. This finding highlights the critical importance of preparation and training in the art and science of mentoring as Navy personnel progress through the leader pipeline. Because not all service members have positive mentor role models, and because relationship skills do not come easily for some, leaders must provide consistent and high-quality training for mentorship and, when formal mentoring programs exist, thoughtfully recruit master mentors with track records of excellence in the mentor role.

Finally, it is imperative that the Navy find ways to highlight and reinforce mentoring so that it is perceived as a crucial and valued leader activity. Such reinforcement should include ongoing attention to mentorship in communications from top leaders, local commanders, and warfare communities. Reinforcement strategies might also incorporate fleet-wide mentoring awards and the development of special designations ("master mentor") to recognize specialized training and exceptional performance in this role.

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## NOTES

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# “THE NAVY’S SUCCESS SPEAKS FOR ITSELF”?

## The German Navy’s Independent Energy Security Strategy, 1932–1940

Anand Toprani

*[The] Naval High Command has from the very beginning operated from the conviction—especially in view of the lessons Italy had to learn during the Abyssinian War—that in any military conflict, particularly one in which England is in any way involved, economic warfare will play a considerable role alongside military operations. In view of the fact that England has at its disposal connections around the world, it is only possible for the navy to secure oil supplies from overseas through long and exhaustive preparation.*

ADMIRAL ERICH RAEDER TO ECONOMICS MINISTER WALTHER FUNK, 6 MAY 1940

*[You claim] that only the Naval High Command has failed to show any appreciation for your efforts with regard to petroleum supplies. This is correct. The Naval High Command recognized from the start that, by pursuing a wartime petroleum supply policy under the influence of the major oil companies, your department was following a path that must eventually lead to calamity.*

RAEDER TO FUNK, 27 JUNE 1940

**T**he National Socialists’ primary foreign policy objective after taking office was to rearm Germany so that it might reverse the verdict of the First World War and acquire the “living space” necessary to becoming a world power on par with Britain or the United States. For the German armed services, the Third

*Anand Toprani is an Assistant Professor of Strategy and Policy at the Naval War College. He received an AB in history from Cornell University, an MPhil in modern European history from University College, Oxford, and a PhD in history from Georgetown University. He is a specialist in energy geopolitics, great-power relations, and military history.*

Reich’s ambitious plans meant that they were compelled to broaden their missions and operational capabilities. For its part, the German navy expanded between 1933 and 1939 from a coastal-defense force to one capable of deploying a fleet to challenge the Royal Navy for command of the seas. But this would be impossible without sufficient raw materials, most importantly petroleum to fuel

the navy's surface ships and submarines. As an oil-poor nation vulnerable to blockade and short of foreign exchange to pay for imports, Germany had to make hard choices about how to allocate its limited supplies of petroleum—not just between the military and civilian consumers but also among the armed services.

Since the Third Reich required continental hegemony before it could aspire to global supremacy, German leaders devoted their limited economic resources to satisfying the petroleum requirements of their army and air force (gasoline and aviation fuel) before those of the navy (fuel oil and diesel fuel). The German navy resented its subordinate status and—as befits a budding maritime force with global aspirations—pursued an independent energy-security strategy that featured acquiring in Iraq and Mexico oil concessions that would allow it to stockpile large quantities of petroleum in peacetime. But the navy's long-term oil ambitions—and bureaucratic manipulations—conflicted with the overall energy-security strategy of the Third Reich, which was focused on the short-term goal of fueling a land and air struggle for the mastery of Europe. Although Adolf Hitler expected the navy to play a much larger role in achieving German objectives than even the naval leadership initially expected, other agencies with competing ideas about how to guarantee Germany's energy security joined forces to quash the navy's plans in Iraq and Mexico in 1936 and 1938 before they did irreparable damage to Germany's relations with the major U.S. and British oil companies, which were the Third Reich's most important foreign suppliers of oil prior to the outbreak of the Second World War.

### THE PROBLEM OF NAVAL FUEL SUPPLIES IN THE THIRD REICH

In the years between the National Socialist “seizure of power” in 1933 and the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, the Third Reich made impressive strides in increasing Germany's supply of petroleum (see table 1). The centerpiece of Germany's energy-security strategy to increase domestic production of petroleum was the development of a synthetic-fuel industry. Since before the First World War German scientists had been perfecting methods of synthesizing various petroleum products from coal—first the Bergius process (1913), which yielded gasoline, then the Fischer-Tropsch process (1926), which could produce heavier fuels, such as diesel, but was more expensive than the Bergius process. The National Socialists did not stop at synthetic fuel; they embraced what we would today call an “all of the above” approach, including incentivizing domestic crude-oil production and curtailing civilian consumption (0.312 barrels of gasoline per capita in Germany, compared with 0.98 in Great Britain and 3.99 in the United States by 1938).<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, total consumption within Germany still rose as the economy recovered from the Great Depression, and although domestic synthetic- and



**TABLE 1**  
**GERMANY'S PETROLEUM SUPPLY, 1933–1939**  
**(THOUSANDS OF METRIC TONS)**

Year	Crude Oil	Refined Petroleum (natural & synthetic)	Imports
1933	230	291	2,685
1934	318	N/A	3,155
1935	427	N/A	3,826
1936	445	N/A	4,229
1937	453	620	4,313
		Synthetic Fuel Only	
1938	552	1,600	4,957
1939	888	2,200	5,165

*Note:* Crude oil statistics for 1938–39 includes Austrian output. Figures drawn from Reichs-Kredit-Gesellschaft AG, "Treibstoffwirtschaft in der Welt und in Deutschland"; and USSBS, *Effects of Strategic Bombing on the German War Economy*, p. 75.

crude-oil production managed to keep pace, the share of imports within Germany's overall supply of petroleum did not decline (70 percent by 1938). Nor, for that matter, were the armed services able to make significant progress in accumulating stockpiles, even though they knew full well from their experience during the Great War that they could not expect to import much from over-

seas in the event of a British blockade.<sup>2</sup>

The most pressing challenge was, however, the cost of importing petroleum to meet rising domestic consumption—from 2,478,000 tons in 1932 to 5,165,000 tons in 1939. Importing large quantities of petroleum in peacetime was not a straightforward matter, since the U.S. and British oil companies that dominated the global oil industry demanded at least partial repayment in hard currency.<sup>3</sup> As a result, German expenditures of foreign exchange for petroleum imports almost doubled during the first half of the Third Reich, from 129,800,000 Reichsmarks (RM) in 1933 to 230,000,000 RM in 1939.<sup>4</sup> Under normal circumstances this would not pose an insurmountable challenge, since a modern industrial nation can simply boost its exports to balance its current account. Germany was not, however, operating under normal economic conditions after the National Socialists took power. The Great Depression and the collapse in global trade had wiped out most of Germany's foreign-exchange reserves before 1933, after which rearmament soaked up German industrial and domestic raw materials (e.g., coal) production, leaving only small quantities available for export. The need to import food and strategic raw materials and to service the German foreign debt, as well as fears of unleashing inflation, convinced Hitler and Hjalmar Schacht (then president of the Reichsbank and later minister of economics) to reject the path taken by Britain and the United States and devalue the Reichsmark.<sup>5</sup> This meant that German exports were overvalued by as much as 40 percent compared with those priced in dollars or sterling.<sup>6</sup> Although this eased Germany's import bill, reduced exports meant lower earnings of foreign exchange, which (along with the

overall rise in commodity prices as the global economy recovered from the Great Depression) impaired the Third Reich's ability to cover the gap between its consumption and production of most key strategic raw materials through imports.<sup>7</sup>

Even Romania, which became Germany's most important source of oil after 1939 and later joined the Axis, was not a reliable supplier. Production there peaked in 1936 at 8,700,000 tons—good for fourth place among world oil producers but only 5 percent of the output of the United States. Six of the seven largest oil companies in Romania before the war, accounting for roughly 80 percent of that nation's production, were owned by American, British, Dutch, French, and Belgian oil companies or banks, while Romanian, Italian, and German firms controlled the remaining production. The Romanian government meanwhile received royalties from the foreign oil companies in the form of crude oil (11–12 percent of total production). The major obstacle from Germany's perspective was that it could not import oil at will. Starting in 1935, Bucharest limited the amount of oil it exported to Germany that could be paid for through clearing agreements (see below) to 25 percent of the total value of all exports.<sup>8</sup>

During the Third Reich, Germany used a variety of methods to finance international trade, including “clearing agreements,” “barter agreements,” and payment in “blocked currency.” Clearing agreements are basically pools of money into which a nation's exporters deposit the hard-currency proceeds of their sales; importers thereafter draw from these pools to finance their purchases. Barter agreements are transactions denominated in finished or unfinished goods. Finally, the Reich created “blocked currency” known as “Askimarks” (a German portmanteau word for Foreigners' Special Accounts for Domestic Payment) to finance trade with Latin America. These “Askimarks” were nonconvertible and could only be used to purchase specified German goods.<sup>9</sup> In all three instances, the guiding principle was to keep the amount of money that changed hands to a minimum. This included both foreign exchange (e.g., dollars and sterling) and the Reichsmark, whose value would drop if foreigners exchanged it for other currencies. The Third Reich was happy to allow foreign firms to accumulate their earnings within Germany, provided that they did not repatriate them. This was of course unacceptable to the U.S. and British oil companies, which had to remit at least some of their earnings back home.<sup>10</sup>

One method of meeting Germany's oil requirements at minimal cost to the country's dwindling reserves of foreign exchange was importing crude oil directly from Iraq through the British Oil Development Company (BOD), a multinational combine that won the oil concession for all of Iraq west of the Tigris River in 1932. Even though supplies from Iraq would be unavailable in the event of a British blockade, many German officials—especially the navy leadership—hoped the

BOD would facilitate the stockpiling of oil in peacetime and reduce Germany's dependence on the U.S. and British major oil companies.<sup>11</sup> Another alternative was to take advantage of Mexico's nationalization of its oil industry in 1938 to purchase the now-discounted Mexican oil with minimal expenditure of foreign exchange.<sup>12</sup> The story of German participation in the BOD and of subsequent efforts in Mexico therefore offers a valuable perspective on the role of one relatively autonomous agency—the German navy—in defining and implementing an independent energy-security strategy within the framework of Germany's overall preparations to wage another world war.<sup>13</sup>

German naval policy during the early years of the Third Reich was relatively modest in scope and objectives. Building on the lessons of the First World War, Admiral Erich Raeder (commander in chief of the German navy) ruled out building a fleet capable of challenging the Royal Navy, preferring a smaller fleet composed of “pocket battleships,” cruisers, aircraft carriers, and submarines. Moreover, he considered France, rather than Britain, both the quantitative benchmark and the expected opponent.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, when it came to petroleum requirements the navy was a minor player by comparison with its sister services.<sup>15</sup> In 1935, a year before Germany embraced a policy of self-sufficiency in petroleum through the Four-Year Plan (mainly by boosting production of synthetic fuel), the German navy imported roughly 75 percent of its requirements.<sup>16</sup> The following year, the Naval High Command projected its annual wartime needs as of 1939 at only 1,400,000 tons of fuel oil and 400,000 tons of diesel fuel, all of which it expected would be supplied from domestic production and reserves.<sup>17</sup> By 1938, however, as the process of rearmament gathered steam, the German navy was estimating it would require as much as 4,500,000 tons of fuel oil per year in wartime. Since domestic production of fuel oil was well behind expectations (only 130,000 tons per annum), the navy had no option but to import most of its requirements.<sup>18</sup>

The navy's requirements continued to balloon as Germany's aggressive foreign policy increased the probability of a great-power conflict. Starting in 1933, Raeder had sought to manipulate Hitler into granting the navy a larger slice of the resource pie by framing the desired naval construction program in terms designed to appeal to Hitler's stated policy preferences. Hitler had, since his earliest days in politics and explicitly in *Mein Kampf* and his unpublished “Second Book,” spoken in favor of an alliance with Britain and Italy directed against France, then the Soviet Union, and finally the United States. Following Hitler's cues, rather than demanding a fleet equal to that of the Royal Navy the navy asked for one equal to that of France, which it hoped would enhance Germany's value as an ally to Britain (i.e., in accord with Hitler's grand strategy).<sup>19</sup>



Raeder (second from left), General Werner von Blomberg (minister of war; third from left), and Hitler on board the battleship *Deutschland* in April 1934  
 Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-1987-0703-514 / CC-BY-SA

Raeder, then, was caught flat-footed when Hitler abruptly abandoned his efforts to woo Britain and instead sought to use the German navy as a deterrent against it. As relations with Britain deteriorated in the wake of the Anschluss with Austria and the onset of the Sudeten crisis in the summer of 1938, Hitler pushed the navy to adopt more and more expansive construction programs. Raeder still preferred a balanced fleet designed to wage a *guerre de course* against Britain, but Hitler overruled him and demanded additional capital ships. This process culminated in the “Z-Plan” of January 1939, which envisaged the creation by 1946 of a fleet of superbattleships capable of challenging the Royal Navy for maritime dominance.<sup>20</sup> As a result of the Z-Plan the navy’s annual requirements of fuel oil and diesel fuel in wartime would skyrocket to eight million tons by 1947–48, whereas the entire German domestic production of all petroleum products in 1938 totaled a mere 6,150,000 tons. Even assuming sufficient oil could be found—which was unlikely, since the air force had also received permission to quintuple its frontline and reserve strength—the navy would need to construct ten million tons of fuel-storage capacity at a time when there was insufficient coal, iron, or steel available to meet existing armaments or economic programs (including the expansion of synthetic-fuel production).<sup>21</sup>

As early as 1937, in fact, the navy had begun to express doubts about whether Germany would soon be self-sufficient in petroleum and to worry that domestic production of fuel oil and diesel was lagging behind that of the gasoline and

aviation fuel critical for combined-arms operations on land (i.e., supplies for the army and air force).<sup>22</sup> The fact that the man responsible for Germany's economic mobilization, Hermann Göring, was also commander in chief of the air force and privileged the expansion of synthetic gasoline production (including aviation fuel) over that of fuel oil and diesel fuel did not go unnoticed within the navy.<sup>23</sup> Although Germany had poured resources into its burgeoning synthetic-fuel industry, future production would, according to one naval assessment, likely only suffice "to absorb" increases in military and civilian consumption. The navy therefore could not afford to be cut off from the international oil market. Rather than chase "oil autarky" in Europe, the navy's position by 1938 was that it ought "to maintain and forcefully expand connections with foreign oil companies."<sup>24</sup>

By September 1939 imported oil accounted for roughly a quarter of the German navy's diesel supply and a third of its fuel oil supply. For the year as a whole, 228,105 tons of fuel and 125,042 tons of diesel fuel came from overseas.<sup>25</sup> The navy considered this inadequate and wished to accumulate a reserve equivalent to at least a year's consumption, after which time anticipated higher domestic production could pick up the slack. There was no shortage of oil on the international market; the problem, rather, was financial, since Germany lacked the foreign exchange to pay for imports of sufficient quantities of petroleum from the major U.S. and British oil companies. The Office of the Four-Year Plan (which oversaw Germany's policy of autarky) and the Armed Forces High Command (theoretically responsible for coordinating all the services but in practice serving as Hitler's personal military staff with little authority over the other services) continued to purchase whatever they could from abroad (mainly diesel and fuel oil) while producing the most expensive products, especially aviation fuel and lubricants, domestically through either conventional drilling and refining or synthesis. The German navy, by contrast, pursued three separate paths to securing cheap petroleum from abroad without going through the major oil companies: Estonian oil shale and crude oil from Iraq and from Mexico.<sup>26</sup>

### GERMANY AND THE SEARCH FOR OIL IN IRAQ, 1932–1936

Estonian oil shale was attractive in spite of its uncompetitive price since Estonia (an independent republic until 1940) could be a reliable source of supply even in wartime, because Germany thought it likely that it would still control access through the Baltic even during a conflict against Britain or the Soviet Union. Exports of petroleum extracted from shale to Germany began in 1937 and reached 110,000 tons in 1939. But oil shale yielded only trivial amounts of naval fuel—the navy's prewar contracts guaranteed deliveries of only three thousand tons of fuel oil a month (at well above the world market price) against a total consumption of 44,300 tons. In any case, deliveries ended in 1940 after the Soviet Union annexed

Estonia; also, in August 1941 retreating Red Army troops destroyed the shale-processing installations before the Wehrmacht could occupy them.<sup>27</sup>

With regard to Iraq, the impetus came from a German industrial consortium comprising four major steel companies—Ferrostaal, Otto Wolff, Mannesmann, and Stahlunion (although Ferrostaal was the dominant member). This consortium was a partner in the British Oil Development Company in Iraq.<sup>28</sup> In fact, the German navy was a relative latecomer to this story—various civilian agencies had been considering the consequences of German participation in the BOD since 1930, when the newly formed company was still negotiating with the Iraqi government for a concession.<sup>29</sup> BOD representatives had assured the German legation in Baghdad that their aim was to promote the “Open Door” in Iraq and break the “preferential position” enjoyed by the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC), a multinational conglomerate composed of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (after 1935 the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company), Royal Dutch/Shell, the Compagnie Française des Pétroles, the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey, and the Standard Oil Company of New York.<sup>30</sup> The IPC had secured a formal concession in 1925, initially for the entire country but in 1931, when the company renegotiated the concession, limited to thirty-two thousand square miles—that is, all of Iraq east of the Tigris River. The company discovered a massive oil field (Baba Gurgar) in 1927 near Kirkuk but had made little progress in developing it since then.<sup>31</sup> In frustration, the Iraqi government turned in 1932 to the BOD, which received a concession covering forty-six thousand square miles west of the Tigris River.<sup>32</sup> (The online version of this article reproduces period maps of crude oil concessions in the Middle East.)

From the start, there was considerable interest in the prospect of German firms earning tens of millions of Reichsmarks in industrial orders and Germany finding a cheap source of oil imports.<sup>33</sup> There was also some trepidation—the German Foreign Office warned that if the BOD was too successful, it could spark a price war in Germany should the major oil companies decide to drive it from that market. While German consumers would benefit, such domestic petroleum producers as the chemical cartel IG Farben, which had made massive investments in synthetic-fuel production since 1925, would suffer heavy losses. This would have a ripple effect throughout the German economy, since expansion of synthetic-fuel production stimulated demand for labor, coal, and steel.<sup>34</sup> Although they were supportive of the ambitions of the BOD, senior Foreign Office officials suggested that the German government maintain its distance by reining in German diplomats in Iraq and refraining from extending official support to the company.<sup>35</sup>

Initially, most German officials were skeptical of the strategic value of Iraqi oil, especially in wartime, since it was vulnerable to blockade. But they were



impressed by the economic benefits for depression-ridden German industry and hoped that French and Italian participation in the BOD would improve the company's prospects.<sup>36</sup> Over the objections of IG Farben, the government agreed in 1932 to guarantee up to 50 percent of a million-Reichsmark investment made by the German industrial consortium to acquire half the shares in the BOD held by one of the founders of the company, Thomas Brown. Although a Scottish businessman, Brown enjoyed close ties to the German government through his efforts to promote closer economic relations between Germany and Persia during the 1920s.<sup>37</sup> By virtue of these special "founders' rights," the German firms could supply 38 percent of the BOD's materiel requirements (with a total value of perhaps 100,000,000 RM) and receive 12 percent of the oil produced by the company.<sup>38</sup>

The question of official German support for the BOD had initially been a purely civilian matter, with the ministries of economics, finance, and foreign affairs taking responsibility. This changed between 1934 and 1936, when the German consortium (in concert with its Italian partners) tried to acquire majority control of the BOD and of the holding company, Mosul Oil Fields, established to exploit the BOD's concession rights.<sup>39</sup> The armed services, the German navy in particular, now evinced considerable interest in the outcome of events in Iraq, as the rise of the Third Reich—and Hitler's explicit commitment to a crash rearmament program no matter what the cost—portended a significant rise in military oil consumption within the coming decade.<sup>40</sup>

The German consortium within the BOD sought to acquire control of the company by subscribing to private share offerings to raise capital now unavailable on London financial markets because of the machinations of the rival IPC

**TABLE 2**  
**IRAQI OIL PRODUCTION**  
**(THOUSANDS OF BARRELS)**

1932	836
1933	917
1934	7,689
1935	27,408
1936	30,406
1937	31,836
1938	32,643

*Source note:* Figures drawn from DeGolyer and MacNaughton, *Twentieth Century Petroleum Statistics* (Dallas: DeGolyer and MacNaughton, 2004).

to fund the BOD's exploration efforts and cover the "dead rent" (i.e., royalties to be paid before any oil production had started—starting at £100,000 in gold in 1933 and rising to £200,000 by 1937) owed to the Iraqi government. Although the BOD had yet to produce oil on a commercial scale (see table 2), the industrial consortium and its supporters within the German government were encouraged by favorable geological assessments by Alfred Bentz, Germany's premier petroleum geologist and head of the oil division of the Prussian Geological Survey. In 1935, he estimated that the BOD concession had twenty-three million tons of proven reserves and another hundred million tons of probable reserves.<sup>41</sup>



Because of Germany's balance-of-payments difficulties, the German consortium had to pay for most of these new shares with industrial goods required for the construction of oil production infrastructure, including a railway to the Mediterranean through Syria. A rail line was necessary because the oil discovered in the BOD's concession was too "heavy" (50 percent asphalt content) to pump—although a pipeline was not out of the question in the future if the Germans resolved the technical obstacles. (Ferrostaal had, in the interim, also worked out an agreement with independent German and British refiners to sell them up to a million tons of heavy oil per year.)<sup>42</sup> Total expenditures would have reached over 20,000,000 RM by 1936, but the consortium was willing to move forward if the Reich put forward a 70 percent financial guarantee (although German bureaucrats speculated it would have settled for 50 percent).<sup>43</sup>

The question whether to support the push for a greater German stake in the BOD united military and civilian policy makers. The War Ministry supported any plan that could increase its supply of petroleum, especially since peacetime naval diesel and fuel-oil consumption was expected to rise 2.5 times between 1935 and 1938. The navy's supply/demand position was in fact so tight that it could only sustain current operations and had nothing left over to stockpile. Economics Minister Schacht, the man who had stabilized the Reichsmark in 1934 without resorting to devaluation by embracing a rigid system of capital controls and bilateral trade agreements, liked the idea of taking control of the BOD. For him, it offered an easy means to reconcile the competing demands of rearming and of improving Germany's balance of payments while reducing the country's dependence on the U.S. and British major oil companies.<sup>44</sup> The Foreign Office believed that both the British and the Iraqis would welcome a German "counterweight" to the Italians and the Soviets in the Middle East, while the German minister to Iraq (Fritz Grobba) argued that building a railway to carry oil of the British Oil Development Company to the Mediterranean would earn Germany significant goodwill across the Middle East.<sup>45</sup> Time was of the essence—the military and Economics Ministry had to start making preparations immediately to ensure that there were enough tankers to move the oil from Iraq to Germany and sufficient independent domestic refining capacity to process it, as most of the existing refineries were owned by the major oil companies, which would not process crude oil from rival firms.<sup>46</sup>

The only consistent opposition came from the Finance Ministry. After initially backing down in the face of unified support for additional financial support for the German industrial consortium in August 1935, the ministry dug in its heels when Ferrostaal requested guarantees a few months later for a further 15,000,000 RM of expenditures (including royalty payments to the Iraqi government, which the Italians could no longer cover following the outbreak of the Second

Italo-Abyssinian War).<sup>47</sup> As Finance Minister Johann Ludwig von Krosigk explained to Schacht in December 1935, expanding the Third Reich's financial exposure in Iraq made economic sense only if the German group within the BOD achieved majority control of the company, whereas the plan proposed by Ferrostaal left the German industrial consortium with only a 33 percent stake. The low quality of the oil discovered in the BOD's concession was another impediment. Even assuming it was possible to build a thousand-kilometer railway capable of transporting sufficient quantities of oil to the Mediterranean coast, the BOD's higher operating costs would put it at a disadvantage compared with the capital-rich IPC, which would redouble its efforts to throttle its competitor, especially if the BOD tried to move excess oil to the Persian Gulf to compete for markets beyond Europe.<sup>48</sup>

A meeting of key officials at the Economics Ministry in December 1935 failed to reach a consensus.<sup>49</sup> The Finance Ministry remained skeptical, while the Economics Ministry, the Naval High Command, and the Foreign Office continued to support a German takeover of the BOD in spite of the mounting costs.<sup>50</sup> In any event, a decision had to be made soon. The Germans had the option to acquire a controlling interest in the company along with 50 percent of its future oil production in concert with British and American partners, including the independent oilman William Rhodes Davis, who would subsequently play a major role in promoting the German-Mexican oil trade.<sup>51</sup>

In January 1936, Raeder tried one last time to make the case for both the strategic and commercial viability of the BOD to Krosigk. The admiral claimed that the BOD's concession could produce up to three million tons of crude oil per year, one-third of which would go to Germany, at a cost of only a pound per ton, quickly amortizing the costs of building the necessary tankers and storage facilities. Also, recent technological advances meant that the heavy oil from the BOD concession could be refined into expensive fuels and lubricants. Raeder advised that at the very least Germany hold on to its shares in the BOD for a while longer, if only to bargain them for rights to "oil territories in Central or South America, which could after examination prove to be more advantageous in terms of supplying Germany in either war or peace in view of their geographical situation."<sup>52</sup>

During a meeting with Krosigk on 25 March 1936, according to naval records, Wilhelm Keppler (one of Hitler's primary economic advisers) apparently dismissed the navy's plans as "superfluous, since the German Reich would within a short amount of time cover its entire demand for oil internally." Keppler was more concerned, Raeder perceived, by the possibility that the navy might no longer be a customer for the vast quantities of expensive synthetic fuel to be produced domestically.<sup>53</sup> Keppler later disputed the navy's characterization of his position.<sup>54</sup> He insisted that he had broached the matter of German control

of the BOD with no less an authority than the Führer. Hitler had been skeptical of supporting a German takeover of the BOD two years before, and nothing had changed since then. As far as Hitler was concerned, Germany lacked the necessary foreign exchange, and anything short of majority control of the company was useless. Most importantly, the scheme would “incur for us the enmity of powerful international oil interests.”<sup>55</sup> Finally, Hitler had little incentive to goad the British, so soon after the remilitarization of the Rhineland.<sup>56</sup>

Ultimately, the navy’s arguments proved unconvincing, and the Third Reich opted against issuing financial guarantees large enough to allow the German industrial consortium to take over the BOD.<sup>57</sup> The Italians had already given up in 1935. The state-owned Azienda Generale Italiana Petroli, which controlled the Italian stake in the BOD, had reassessed its position due to the threat of League of Nations oil sanctions following the invasion of Abyssinia. Italy could hardly depend on oil deliveries from Iraq when they traveled by pipeline through the French League of Nations mandate of Syria or the British mandates of Transjordan and Palestine. The Italians therefore sold their stake in the BOD to the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company and chose instead to concentrate their efforts in Albania.<sup>58</sup>

With the Italians out of the way, there was nothing stopping the IPC from taking control of the BOD, initially by covering the “dead rent” for 1936. The Iraqi prime minister complained to Grobba that the Italians had been paid off by the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (then 51 percent owned by the British government) with promises to continue oil deliveries during the Abyssinian War. In other words, he charged, the British government, in collusion with the oil companies, had rejected the use of oil sanctions over Italy’s brutal invasion of Abyssinia in order to facilitate Rome’s capitulation in the struggle for control of Middle Eastern oil.<sup>59</sup> There is no evidence to support Grobba’s claims (repeated uncritically by several historians) that the British government had been reluctant to push for sanctions less out of fear of driving Italy into an alliance with Germany than out of a desire to take control of the BOD.<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, it is difficult to take issue with the verdict that the Reich abandoned the BOD less out of narrow concerns over the economic viability of the project than for broader strategic considerations.<sup>61</sup>

Ferrostaal eventually (at the end of 1936) sold off its interest in the BOD for £1,250,000 in foreign exchange and future orders to the IPC, which in turn created a subsidiary (Mosul Holdings Ltd., renamed the Mosul Petroleum Company in 1941) that acquired control of the BOD in 1937.<sup>62</sup> The Naval High Command was naturally disappointed by this turn of events. The one consolation was that it might be able to use the proceeds of the sale of the German shares in the BOD for “Mexican oil rights.”<sup>63</sup> But after the sale of Ferrostaal’s shares went through, the only pledge the navy could secure from the Economics Ministry was a vague assurance that it could use the earnings to hunt for other overseas oil concessions.<sup>64</sup>

### THE SHIFT TO MEXICO, 1936–1940

German interest in acquiring an oil concession in Mexico predated the First World War. German geologists had surveyed the country as early as 1912, and the Deutsche Bank (which controlled the major independent German oil company, Deutsche Petroleum), the German Foreign Office, and the Imperial German Navy all expressed interest in securing a concession in Mexico as an alternative oil source that would allow Germany to break the Standard Oil Company's domination of the European market. In May 1914, the Mexican dictator Victoriano Huerta even offered the German ambassador a 150,000-square-kilometer concession in Tampico, which would be expropriated from its American owners, in a vain attempt to solicit German support to prop up his regime, which collapsed in July under pressure from the U.S. government.<sup>65</sup> (See the online version of this article for a reproduction of a period map of Mexican oil fields.)

After the BOD fiasco, the German government, even though Germany lacked the spare refinery capacity to process any crude oil besides that imported by the major oil companies, gave the navy permission in 1937 to pursue opportunities to purchase oil concessions in Latin America. This was the German navy's third and final attempt to secure its own independent source of supply before 1939. There were two provisos: the navy's efforts could "in no way disrupt the internal petroleum economy," and the Third Reich would not consider providing support to any endeavor involving "politically unreliable countries."<sup>66</sup> The Spanish Civil War, which began the year before, lent additional urgency to the search for new suppliers. Naval fuel consumption increased after the Germans joined "nonintervention" patrols with the British and French while supporting operations by Nationalist forces and the Condor Legion of German volunteers. Just as importantly, and also in 1937, Shell and Standard Oil of New Jersey began demanding full payment in hard currency.<sup>67</sup>

The navy moved quickly. As early as September 1936 it had asked the German commercial attaché in Mexico City to query the Mexicans about whether they were interested in establishing a partnership between Germany and Mexico's state-owned company, Petromex, to start production on land within Mexico's national petroleum reserve.<sup>68</sup> The Mexicans initially appeared receptive, but negotiations had stalled by 1938, owing to skepticism on the part of the German Foreign Office and German oil companies (which worried about antagonizing their U.S. and British counterparts), as well as the reluctance of the Mexican government to conclude an intergovernmental accord with the Third Reich when domestic nationalist hostility against foreign control of Mexico's oil was running high.<sup>69</sup>

The Mexican government's nationalization of its oil industry in March 1938—and with it the expropriation of the properties owned by U.S., British, and Dutch oil companies—afforded the Germans an unparalleled opportunity to corner

the market for Mexican oil.<sup>70</sup> The major oil companies had retaliated against nationalization by launching a boycott of expropriated Mexican oil, and Mexico was desperate for new customers as well as technical and financial support to continue increasing output (see table 3).<sup>71</sup> Whatever Mexico's misgivings about the Third Reich, there were no other customers for its oil (besides independent companies that were themselves planning to sell to Germany), especially after negotiations with Italy and Japan failed. The Mexicans were in such desperate straits that they were willing to accept payment through barter. The German navy had meanwhile established a partnership with the Dresdner Bank, which was being used for "camouflage" and handled negotiations with the Mexicans through a subsidiary.<sup>72</sup>

In April 1938 the Naval High Command asked the Economics Ministry to release £600,000 of the foreign exchange earned from the sale of the German shares in the BOD to purchase an oil concession in Mexico.<sup>73</sup> The German navy played fast and loose with the truth to get its way. According to the German minister in Mexico City, the Mexicans were not nearly as eager to grant a concession as the Naval High Command claimed; their problem was disposing of excess oil they already had on hand.<sup>74</sup> But even if a concession agreement went through, production would not start, according to the geologist Bentz, until "*the end of 1941 at the earliest.*"<sup>75</sup> Most importantly, the navy failed to convince its critics that Germany had more to gain than it would lose through closer ties with Mexico. The Economics Ministry had no objection to the navy continuing to buy Mexican oil, but it opposed any intergovernmental accord and rejected the navy's request for foreign exchange. Instead, it tried to convince the navy that oil autarky was within sight, while also confessing its reluctance to incur the wrath of the major

oil companies by defying their boycott of Mexico.<sup>76</sup>

The Third Reich was dependent on the U.S. and British companies to sell them petroleum that could then be stockpiled, and for that reason Germany could not afford "to annoy" them just yet.<sup>77</sup>

Raeder tried again in September and December 1938 through personal appeals to Göring to release the requested £600,000 to begin preparatory work. The Mexican offer was almost too good to be true. Unlike in Iraq, where the logistical challenges of moving oil from the interior to the coast were formidable, Mexico was offering participation in a state-owned concession only sixty kilometers from ports on the Atlantic coast.<sup>78</sup> From geological estimates completed by Bentz in 1936 and 1937, Raeder was

**TABLE 3**  
**MEXICAN OIL PRODUCTION**  
**(THOUSANDS OF BARRELS)**

1933	34,000
1934	38,172
1935	40,241
1936	41,028
1937	46,907
1938	38,506
1939	42,898
1940	44,036

Source note: Figures drawn from DeGolyer and MacNaughton, *Twentieth Century Petroleum Statistics*.

convinced that the concession in question could yield up to ten million tons of oil per year (with 20 percent going to the Mexican government), with shipments to Germany beginning a year after the start of operations.<sup>79</sup> All of this could be had for an expenditure of only £600,000 in foreign exchange, which on the open market would pay for a mere 150,000 tons of petroleum. Plus, Germany could sell any surplus from its operations in Mexico for hard currency. As long as Germany took the “necessary precautions,” its Mexican oil concession might even serve as a source of supply in wartime.<sup>80</sup>

Opposition to the navy’s plans now came from a former ally—the Economics Ministry—which tried to convince the Naval High Command to abandon its quixotic efforts. During an interagency conference on 15 November 1938, the ministry warned the navy that increasing exports to Mexico to pay for imported oil could undermine Germany’s overall financial position.<sup>81</sup> The German navy stuck to its guns, but its efforts proved fruitless; the navy and the Dresdner Bank eventually had to abandon their negotiations with Mexico City for a concession in the face of implacable opposition from the Economics Ministry, which again denied the navy’s application for the release of foreign exchange in December 1938.<sup>82</sup>

There was one other possibility: the Mexicans were still sitting on copious amounts of oil and willing to sell on the basis of barter with deferred payment. Through supply contracts with the aforementioned William Davis (who owned concessions within the rich Poza Rica oil field and had been pushing for closer German-Mexican commercial relations since 1933), the German navy took full advantage of the Mexicans’ difficulties following nationalization.<sup>83</sup> In the short run, it acquired extra oil to cover its additional requirements during the Spanish Civil War. Also, Mexico quickly became an invaluable source of oil for the navy in its redoubled efforts to find more-accommodating suppliers than the major U.S. and British companies, such as Shell and Standard Oil, which had been demanding full payment in hard currency since 1937. The navy’s schemes were a thorn in the side of the major oil companies, which started making vague threats and sought to discredit Davis.<sup>84</sup>

The major oil companies also dangled a number of carrots to keep the Third Reich from violating their boycott against Mexico. Both Standard Oil of New Jersey and Royal Dutch/Shell (the two foreign firms with the largest interests in Mexico prior to nationalization) offered to place additional commercial orders with German firms and accept partial compensation through clearing agreements.<sup>85</sup> In August 1938, Shell went farther and made the Third Reich an offer it could not refuse: Shell would replace any oil imported from Mexico and accept payment on a clearing basis. The navy was not fooled—Shell’s offer was a ploy to poison Germany’s relationship with Mexico, which had been a reliable partner



even during the Sudeten crisis that year. Both Standard and Shell, on the other hand, had created numerous “difficulties,” including diverting tankers heading to Germany to Britain. Mexico was also one of the few oil producers willing to accept payment in Reichsmarks, and if Germany cut ties there, it would be completely at the mercy of the major U.S. and British oil companies. Rather than knuckle under to the major companies’ blackmail, the navy pointed out that “there are in the world thousands of independent oil companies besides the majors, among which many would be ready under favorable conditions to undertake the delivery of all manner of fuels to Germany.”<sup>86</sup> Economics Minister Walther Funk did not dispute that his department had sought to maintain good relations with the major oil companies but countered that this had been done in accordance with Germany’s overall energy-security strategy, which stressed the fulfillment of immediate requirements.<sup>87</sup>



Walther Funk at the Nuremberg war crimes trials

U.S. government photo

The available evidence seems to support the navy’s argument. Mexico, particularly under the left-wing president Lázaro Cárdenas, had little affinity for the Third Reich, but it had to stifle its political misgivings to make ends meet.<sup>88</sup> The Reich imported 649,216 tons of Mexican petroleum in 1938, compared with 281,266 tons in 1933, much of it arranged by private firms. Imports continued to rise right up to the outbreak of the Second World War. Davis’s oil company, for instance, exported during the first eight months of 1939 1,972,609 tons of Mexican oil, most of which went to Germany—by now the largest customer for Mexican petroleum products.<sup>89</sup> As a result, the German navy’s reserves of diesel fuel rose from 262,000 tons on 1 January 1938 to 650,000 on war’s eve (about three years’ wartime consumption), even though its share of domestic German production had not increased.<sup>90</sup>

By the time the Second World War began, the German navy’s efforts to cover the differential between its expected wartime consumption and actual domestic production by stockpiling large quantities of imported oil had, in the assessment of one historian, been consigned “to the realm of fantasy.”<sup>91</sup> Raeder complained that the other government departments had been “dismissive” of the navy’s suggestions, which he claimed could have provided Germany with the means to accumulate large military and civilian stockpiles. The Economics Ministry, Raeder contended in a particularly nasty missive of June 1940, had been in the pocket of the U.S. and British major oil companies, and its policies were “disastrous” for Germany’s energy security. There was no better proof of the soundness of the navy’s alternative strategy, Raeder argued, than the fact that Göring had been forced following the war’s outbreak “to withdraw petroleum from the navy and transfer it to the economy and other branches of the armed services.”<sup>92</sup>



After the war, Raeder bragged that the navy had managed to stockpile roughly a million tons of petroleum before the war from a variety of sources—“most of all from Mexico.”<sup>93</sup> Was his boasting justified? Yes and no. At the onset of the Second World War, Germany’s naval fuel reserves were small compared with those of Japan after Pearl Harbor (forty-three million barrels in total—about 90 percent of which was controlled by the Imperial Japanese Navy) or even Italy in July 1940 (1,666,674 tons for all three services). These figures worked out to two years’ wartime consumption, including domestic oil production, for the Japanese navy and less than five months for the Italian navy (leaving aside army and air force requirements, and based on the rate of consumption during the first quarter of 1941, since Italy’s domestic production was minuscule).<sup>94</sup>

German naval reserves at the start of the war were therefore much smaller in terms of volume than those of either Italy or Japan, but the German navy could at least fall back on a burgeoning domestic oil industry (both synthetic and crude), as well as a share of Romanian oil production. Japan and Italy were not so fortunate, once they lost access to overseas imports and expended their prewar reserves. Most importantly, the German navy’s position was much stronger than that of either its sister services or of the German war economy as a whole. At least some of the credit is attributable to the navy’s success in securing additional imports from Mexico before the outbreak of hostilities. The Third Reich went to war with a reserve stock of only 1,898,000 tons, which amounted to less than six months’ worth of peacetime consumption.<sup>95</sup> As of 25 November 1939, however, the navy alone possessed reserves of 725,000 cubic meters (cbm—i.e., 6.3 barrels of oil, or a little less than one ton) of diesel fuel and 382,000 cbm of fuel oil, not including 50,000 tons of diesel fuel stored abroad. On the basis of the average rate of consumption during the first three months of the war (8,100 cbm of diesel and 71,500 cbm of fuel oil), and assuming no new construction in 1940, the diesel reserves including U-boat consumption would have lasted for more than seven years, while supplies of fuel oil would suffice for five and a half months.<sup>96</sup> Sufficient quantities of diesel fuel for U-boats were available until 1944, but the supply of fuel oil tightened after 1940, when the navy had to start transferring some of its stocks to the German army and then the Italian navy.<sup>97</sup> Like the industrious ant, the navy was punished for its success by having to support unprepared grasshoppers across Germany and Italy.

## RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND HARD CHOICES

No one can deny that a war machine in the Hydrocarbon Age requires fuel, but not all fuels are created equal. Nor for that matter are the interests of consumers, even within a single nation, identical. Both historical and contemporary energy analysts would be wise to avoid a monolithic understanding of the role

of energy (strategic or otherwise) within a given society. Such an understanding has unfortunately been the case with the Third Reich. Building on the work of wartime analysts such as those of the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey, students of Germany's prewar oil policy have focused their attention on the Third Reich's development of synthetic fuel from coal as a means of breaking Germany's dependence on overseas oil sources that were controlled by its enemies, priced in foreign exchange, and susceptible to blockade in wartime.<sup>98</sup>

Synthetic fuel did indeed afford Germany a measure of energy independence on the eve of the Second World War, but only for certain kinds of petroleum products, namely, lighter fuels, such as gasoline. While the German army and air force enjoyed considerable benefits from prewar policies, the navy did not and was forced to pursue imaginative means of securing the diesel fuel and fuel oil it required but Germany's domestic synthetic- and crude-oil industries could not provide. The bitter feud that ensued exposed one of the contradictory tendencies at the heart of the Third Reich's supposedly totalitarian approach to rearmament—one between a dominant, "continental" faction obsessed with "autarky" and a navy that retained a "maritime" perspective.<sup>99</sup> Leaving aside whether its assessments of German prospects in Iraq and Mexico were justified, the navy's pursuit of an independent energy-security strategy ran afoul of the overall energy-security strategy of the Third Reich. That larger strategy sought to appease the U.S. and British oil companies in peacetime even as it stockpiled supplies and built up its synthetic-fuel industry to wage a war that would forever free Germany from its dependence on overseas raw materials—in part by expropriating the assets of the very companies with which it had traded in peacetime.<sup>100</sup>

Since the German navy (aside from its U-boats) played a relatively minor role during the Second World War, it is tempting to dismiss the story of its efforts to secure oil from Iraq and Mexico during the 1930s as a historical curiosity.<sup>101</sup> But this would be a mistake, for those episodes afford us insight concerning Germany's wider grand strategy. Germany did not reject a stake in the oil of Iraq or Mexico merely because of financial constraints. Starting in October 1936, around the time Ferrostaal began selling off its interest in the BOD, the Third Reich would expend 574,000,000 RM on synthetic-fuel projects (partially offset by higher duties on imported crude oil) during just the first year of the so-called Four-Year Plan of 1936.<sup>102</sup> Compared with such astronomical sums, several million Reichsmarks in the form of industrial goods or foreign exchange appears to have been a relatively small price to pay for hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of tons of Iraqi or Mexican crude oil per year.

The problem, instead, was that the navy's ambitions clashed with the Third Reich's overarching strategy, since the latter was geared for preparing for war at

the earliest possible time. The German navy's perspective on energy security was shaped by the fact that it required years, if not decades, to design and construct platforms capable of implementing any naval strategy—be it a *guerre de course* using cruisers or a “Mahanian” concept centered on capital ships. The navy had been prepared to wait a decade between the design and commissioning of its first “pocket battleship” in 1933 (*Deutschland*); waiting a handful of years while German interests developed new oil fields in Iraq or Mexico was not a tremendous sacrifice.<sup>103</sup>

But the Third Reich as a whole had only a narrow window of opportunity to achieve its continental objectives. This meant that decisions, especially after 1938, concerning the allocation of economic and financial resources would be made on the basis of Germany's immediate needs. Such thinking, for instance, also encouraged the German air force to prioritize the production of medium and tactical bombers over four-engine heavy bombers, even though German officers shared the prevailing strategic consensus regarding the potential efficacy of strategic bombing.<sup>104</sup> In the case of the navy, whose oil-related schemes would require considerable time to reach fruition, the Third Reich had no option but to maintain its businesslike relationship with the U.S. and British major oil companies, which had proved relatively accommodating with regard to Germany's crippling shortage of foreign exchange. Their oil might have been more expensive than that offered by either Iraq or Mexico, but it was available immediately, and its purchase did not jeopardize relations with other great powers. Within this context, even Hitler realized that the German navy's confrontational policies vis-à-vis the oil companies promised little material gain over the short run, and that at a potentially high strategic cost.

From the perspective of contemporary energy security, the example of the German navy before 1939 represents a valuable lesson in resource management in an era of tight economic and financial constraints. Force development, especially in peacetime, when a nation has yet to mobilize completely, requires hard choices about whose requirements can be met and at what cost to other national consumers. In a constrained resource environment, a policy that seeks to maximize advantage for any one service may entail costs that run contrary to interests of rival institutions. Rather than deluding themselves that it is possible to achieve security in every area, civilian and military decision makers should recognize the potential trade-offs that their decisions can have on other institutions residing under the national security umbrella. Most importantly, they must always be prepared to adjust their expectations and reconcile their parochial interests to the evolving demands and priorities of national strategy in a dynamic strategic environment.

## NOTES

I wish to acknowledge the archivists of the Bundesanstalt für Geowissenschaften und Rohstoffe, the Bundesarchiv (Berlin-Lichterfelde), the Politischen Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, and the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration for their assistance. Neither this article nor the wider study from which it emerged would have been possible without the wisdom and encouragement of my Doktorvater, Prof. David Painter. The editors and referees at the *Naval War College Review* made several suggestions about how to enhance the article's appeal to a naval as well as a scholarly audience. I rewrote and revised this paper during my first year on the faculty of the Strategy and Policy Department at the Naval War College, in Newport, R.I. I would not have survived without the support of my civilian and military colleagues, especially Prof. Marc Genest, Prof. John Maurer, Cdr. Michael Riordan, U.S. Navy, and most of all my first military comoderator, Capt. Mark Jackson, U.S. Navy (Ret.), to whom I dedicate this article as an inadequate token of my gratitude for his patience and friendship. Finally, this article is based on declassified, publicly available records in the Federal Republic of Germany and the United States. The opinions expressed within it are entirely my own and not necessarily those of the U.S. government.

1. The figures on per capita consumption are from United States Strategic Bombing Survey [hereafter USSBS], *The German Oil Industry: Ministerial Report, Team 78* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office [hereafter GPO], 1945), p. 7. The specific chemical properties of various kinds of crude oil affect the volume of space it occupies. One ton of oil can fill between six and eight barrels, depending on its gravity and viscosity. For the sake of clarity, throughout this study, one ton of oil equals seven barrels of oil, and vice versa.
2. One of the measures that mitigated the effects of the blockade in the First World War was a relatively successful effort at stockpiling petroleum before the war. The 343,000 tons accumulated equaled 10 percent of Germany's wartime consumption. The key assessment of oil's strategic role during the First World War remains Ferdinand Friedensburg, *Das Erdöl im Weltkrieg* (Stuttgart, Ger.: Ferdinand Enke Verlag, 1939), esp. pp. 53–58 (Allied blockade measures), 69–80 (Germany's petroleum supply during the war), and 121–28 (oil's influence over the war's outcome).
3. *Foreign exchange* refers to assets held by a nation in foreign currencies. Imports usually require payment in either the currency of the exporting nation or currencies that are freely convertible into others. Because it tends to keep its value and is both a reliable store of wealth and a trusted medium of exchange, a convertible currency (or gold)—often referred to as a hard currency—is purchased by national banks as a “reserve currency” to back up a local currency or liabilities.
4. Reichs-Kredit-Gesellschaft AG, “Treibstoffwirtschaft in der Welt und in Deutschland,” April 1938, T-84/51 (EAP 66-c-2-10/22), National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Md. [hereafter NARA].
5. From 1924 to 1933, one U.S. dollar was worth on average four Reichsmarks, while one British pound fetched about twenty Reichsmarks until 1931 (when Britain went off the gold standard). After taking power, the National Socialists set an artificially high exchange rate to facilitate imports, in spite of Germany's trade deficits. Between 1933 and 1939, one dollar equaled 2.5 RM and one pound about 12 RM. Harold Marcuse, *Historical Dollar-to-Marks Currency Conversion Page*, [www.history.ucsb.edu/faculty/marcuse/projects/currency.htm](http://www.history.ucsb.edu/faculty/marcuse/projects/currency.htm).
6. Additional factors exacerbating Germany's financial difficulties were international antipathy to the Third Reich for its suspension of repayment of foreign debts and for its brutality, as well as emigration by persecuted political and minority groups (especially German Jews). During the first major economic crisis of the regime, in the summer of 1934, total foreign currency reserves sufficed to pay for only one week's worth of imports. Williamson Murray, *The Change in the European Balance of Power, 1938–1939: The Path to Ruin* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1984), pp. 4–17; Adam Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (New York: Viking, 2006), pp. 37–134, esp. pp. 49–50, 68–86.

7. Besides Murray's and Tooze's books, the preceding discussion is drawn from Anand Toprani, "Oil and Grand Strategy: Great Britain and Germany, 1918–1941" (PhD diss., Georgetown University, 2012), pp. 346–408; USSBS, *The Effects of Strategic Bombing on the German War Economy* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, n.d.), pp. 73–78; USSBS, *German Oil Industry*; USSBS, *Oil Division: Final Report* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1945); Anthony Krammer, "Fueling the Third Reich," *Technology and Culture* 19, no. 3 (1978), pp. 394–422; and Raymond Stokes, "The Oil Industry in Nazi Germany, 1936–1945," *Business History Review* 59, no. 2 (Summer 1985), pp. 254–77.
8. Dietrich Eichholtz, *Deutsche Politik und rumänisches Öl, 1938–1941: Eine Studie über Erdölimperialisumus* (Leipzig, Ger.: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2005), pp. 13–16.
9. David Haglund, "'Gray Areas' and Raw Materials," *Inter-American Economic Affairs* 36, no. 3 (1982), p. 34. For more-detailed discussion, see H. W. Arndt, *The Economic Lessons of the Nineteen-Thirties* (London: Routledge, 1963), pp. 176–206, and Günther Reimann, *The Vampire Economy: Doing Business under Fascism* (New York: Vanguard, 1939).
10. Some companies did agree, however, to keep a portion of their profits in Germany and used them instead to purchase German industrial goods. Mira Wilkins, *The Maturing of Multinational Enterprise: American Business Abroad from 1914 to 1970* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1974), pp. 237–38.
11. The key source on the BOD is Helmut Mejcher, *Die Politik und das Öl im Nahen Osten: I. Der Kampf der Mächte und Konzerne vor dem Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Stuttgart, Fed. Rep. Ger.: Klett-Cotta, 1980), pp. 102–45, but it suffers from the defects of a narrow source base—Mejcher relied largely on the records of the German Finance Ministry, which means that his narrative omits certain key details and is sometimes overly speculative. See also Mejcher, "The International Petroleum Cartel (1928), Arab and Turkish Oil Aspirations and German Oil Policy towards the Middle East on the Eve of the Second World War," in *Oil, the Middle East, North Africa and the Industrial States*, ed. Klaus Jürgen Gantzel and Helmut Mejcher (Paderborn, Fed. Rep. Ger.: F. Schöningh, 1984), pp. 27–59, esp. 54–57, and Mejcher, *The Struggle for a New Middle East in the 20th Century: Studies in Imperial Design and National Politics* (Piscataway, N.J.: Transaction, 2007), pp. 371–82.
12. Klaus Volland, *Das Dritte Reich und Mexiko: Studien zur Entwicklung des deutsch-mexikanischen Verhältnisses 1933–1942 unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Ölpolitik* (Frankfurt am Main, Fed. Rep. Ger.: Peter Lang, 1976), pp. 83–174, is indispensable on the role of oil in German-Mexican relations. Lorenzo Meyer, *Mexico and the United States in the Oil Controversy, 1917–1942* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1977), pp. 173–216 (pp. 209–13 for Mexican trade with the Axis), is the best work on the Mexican nationalization and its immediate aftermath from the Mexican perspective.
13. The primary studies of the German navy's oil policy during the Third Reich are Wilhelm Meier-Dörnberg, *Die Ölversorgung der Kriegsmarine 1935 bis 1945* (Freiburg, Fed. Rep. Ger.: Rombach, 1973), passim, esp. pp. 31–44 for the navy's efforts in Iraq and Mexico, and Hans-Jürgen Zetzsche, "Logistik und Operationen: Die Mineralölversorgung der Kriegsmarine im Zweiten Weltkrieg" (PhD diss., Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel, 1986), pp. 18–102, esp. 46–72. Erich Raeder's memoirs are broadly accurate but unreliable in their particulars: *Mein Leben: Von 1935 bis Spandau* (Tübingen-Neckar, Fed. Rep. Ger.: Verlag Fritz Schlichtenmayer, 1957), pp. 58–65. Titus Kockel utilized previously unavailable sources, such as the records of the Bundesanstalt für Geowissenschaften und Rohstoffe [hereafter BGR] in his studies of prewar German oil policy, but his findings concerning the navy's efforts in Iraq and Mexico are derived largely from the existing secondary literature: Kockel, "Geologie und deutsche Ölpolitik: Die frühe Karriere des Erdölgeologen Alfred Theodor Bentz" (PhD diss., Technische Universität Berlin, 2003); Kockel, *Deutsche Ölpolitik* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2005); and Dietrich Eichholtz and Titus Kockel, *Von Krieg zu Krieg: Zwei Studien zur deutschen Erdölpolitik in der Zwischenkriegszeit* (Leipzig, Ger.: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2008), pp. 151–60.
14. Military History Research Unit [hereafter MGFA], *Germany and the Second World War*, vol. 1, *The Build-Up of German Aggression* (Oxford, U.K.: Clarendon, 1990), pp. 458–62.

15. Zetzsche, "Logistik und Operationen," pp. 46–49.
16. Meier-Dörnberg, *Ölversorgung der Kriegsmarine*, p. 31.
17. Raeder to Göring, "Oelbedarf der Kriegsmarine," 4 September 1936, T-77/101 (Wi/IF 5.433), NARA.
18. Armed Forces High Command, Defense-Economy Staff, "Aktennotiz auf Grund einer Besprechung mit Herrn Ministerialrat Dr. Fetzer OKM betr. Oelversorgung," 17 June 1938, T-77/683 (Wi/VI. 356), NARA. Much of the increase since 1933 was attributable to the 1935 Anglo-German Naval Agreement, which authorized the German navy to build up a fleet with a total tonnage 35 percent that of the Royal Navy.
19. MGFA, *Build-Up of German Aggression*, pp. 456–72.
20. Michael Salewski, *Die deutsche Seekriegsleitung* (Frankfurt am Main, Fed. Rep. Ger.: Bernard & Graefe, 1970–75), vol. 1, pp. 38–65; MGFA, *Build-Up of German Aggression*, pp. 472–79.
21. Meier-Dörnberg, *Ölversorgung der Kriegsmarine*, pp. 29–30; MGFA, *Build-Up of German Aggression*, pp. 479, 500; Tooze, *Wages of Destruction*, pp. 287–304, esp. 288–89, 294–95; Zetzsche, "Logistik und Operationen," pp. 58–60. Both Göring and elements of the Wehrmacht tried and failed to circumvent Hitler's order to prioritize the navy's raw materials requirements; Jost Dülffer, *Weimar, Hitler und die Marine: Reichspolitik und Flottenbau, 1920–1939* (Düsseldorf, Fed. Rep. Ger.: Droste Verlag, 1973), pp. 509–12.
22. The best source on prewar German naval construction and strategy is still Dülffer's *Weimar, Hitler und die Marine*, esp. pp. 419–34, for the economic context of naval rearmament in the wake of the Four-Year Plan of 1936. Unfortunately, Dülffer gives petroleum policy short shrift. He acknowledges that the German navy was "skeptical" of the ambitions of the Four-Year Plan with regard to energy independence and would have preferred that the extra resources be committed to rearmament rather than domestic raw material production (pp. 430–31). But Dülffer mistakenly claims that since the Four-Year Plan did not hinder naval construction, Raeder saw no reason to interfere with government policy—an unjustified conclusion, as we shall see.
23. Zetzsche, "Logistik und Operationen," pp. 52–56, 58.
24. Wulf, "Die Ölversorgung Deutschlands in der Marine," n.d. [ca. 1938], enclosed with "Unterlagen (Heft 2) K. Kap. Assmann," n.d., T-1022/4076 (PG 33957), NARA.
25. German Navy, Defense-Economy Office, "Bedeutung der deutschen Mineralölversorgung für die Kriegsmarine," 5 August 1940, T-1022/1772 (PG 32209), NARA. Before the war, most of Germany's oil imports originated in the United States, Latin America, and the Dutch East Indies.
26. Besides the aforementioned secondary sources, the following discussion of the German navy's unsuccessful efforts in Iraq and Mexico is based largely on the contemporaneous summaries included in Raeder to Keitel et al., "Ölversorgung der Kriegsmarine," 6 May 1940; and Raeder to Funk et al., 27 June 1940; both in T-1022/3405 (PG 31762/B), NARA.
27. Manfred Rasch, "Zur Mineralölpolitik der Kriegsmarine: Dokumente aus dem Jahre 1935," *Militärgeschichte Mitteilungen* 37, no. 1 (1985), pp. 71–101, esp. 82–85. See also Meier-Dörnberg, *Ölversorgung der Kriegsmarine*, pp. 33–34.
28. Corporate relations are summarized in Dennis Kumetat, "The Failure of German Business and Economic Policy towards Iraq in the 1930s: The Case of the German Arms and Steel Company Otto Wolff, Cologne," *Al-Abhath: Journal of the American University of Beirut* 55/56 (2007/2008), pp. 147–73.
29. Owing to space constraints, it is impractical to delve deeply into the intricacies of the Reich's relationship with the BOD. The complicated history between 1930 and 1936 is summarized in Jäger, "Memorandum über die Mosul Oil Fields Ltd.," 22 January 1942, enclosed with Jäger to Griebel, "Iraq," 23 January 1942, T-77/660 (Wi/VI. 142), NARA. The 22 January memo appears to be based on an earlier paper prepared by Ferrostaal to justify its request for government financial assistance in taking over the BOD: "Zusammenfassende Darstellung über Mosul Oil Fields Ltd.," 18 November 1935, R2/16816, Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde [hereafter BA-B]. The key documents may be found



- in R 2/16815–16816, BA-B; R 92244–92248, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtiges Amtes [hereafter PAAA]; and T-77/645 (Wi/Vi. 13a, b), NARA. The financial composition of both the BOD and its subsidiary Mosul Oil Fields is summarized in “B.O.D. Co. Ltd.” and “Mosul Oil Fields, Ltd.,” n.d. [after August 1936], R 8119/8369, BA-B. For secondary-source accounts, besides Mejcher, *Die Politik und das Öl*, see Meier-Dörnberg, *Ölversorgung der Kriegsmarine*, pp. 34–39, and Zetzsche, “Logistik und Operationen,” pp. 65–68. It is still worth consulting Fritz Grobba’s account of German participation in the BOD, in spite of its factual errors, if only because he was a direct participant in those events: Fritz Grobba, *Männer und Mächte im Orient: 25 Jahre diplomatischer Tätigkeit im Orient* (Göttingen, Fed. Rep. Ger.: Musterschmidt-Verlag, 1967), pp. 85–94.
30. Today these companies are known as BP, Shell, Total, and (for the two Standard Oils) ExxonMobil.
  31. Litten, “Erdöl im Irak,” 31 January 1930, R 92244, PAAA. See also “Niederschrift über die Bedeutung der deutschen Quote in der British Oil Development Co.,” 25 May 1931, R 92245, PAAA; and Grobba, “Weltmarktperspektiven für Irak-Petroleum,” 9 February 1933, R 92246, PAAA.
  32. The history of Iraq’s oil industry during the interwar era, as well as the role of the IPC in stifling oil production, is covered in Walter Adams, James Brock, and John Blair, “Retarding the Development of Iraq’s Oil Resources: An Episode in Oleaginous Diplomacy, 1927–1939,” *Journal of Economic Issues* 28, no. 1 (1993), pp. 69–93; John Blair, *The Control of Oil* (New York: Pantheon, 1976), pp. 80–85; Gregory Nowell, *Mercantile States and the World Oil Cartel, 1900–1939* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1994), pp. 270–75; Edith Penrose and E. F. Penrose, *Iraq: International Relations and National Development* (London: Ernest Benn, 1978), passim; and Daniel Silverfarb, *Britain’s Informal Empire* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1986), pp. 94–105.
  33. Grobba, “Erdöl im Irak,” 19 March 1930[?], R 92244, PAAA.
  34. IG Farben’s controversial role in synthetic-fuel production before and during the Third Reich is assessed in Peter Hayes, *Industry and Ideology: IG Farben in the Nazi Era* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1987), pp. 36–42, and Thomas Parke Hughes, “Technological Momentum in History: Hydrogenation in Germany, 1898–1933,” *Past and Present* 44, no. 1 (1969), pp. 106–32.
  35. Breitfeld, “Memorandum,” 28 April 1930; and Minute for Curtius, “Stehen die deutschen Warenlieferungen für die British Oil Development Company (B.O.D.) im Irak im rechten Verhältnis zu dem politischen Risiko?,” 6 May 1930; both in R 92244, PAAA.
  36. Minister of Economics, “Finanzierung der deutschen Beteiligung an der British Oil Development Co.,” 10 June 1932, R 92245, PAAA; Finance Ministry, “Irak-Oel-Konsortium,” 27 February 1934, R2/16815, BA-B.
  37. Brown had initially tried to arrange financing with the support of the Reich on his own in early 1932, but because of the high-risk nature of oil development the Minister of Economics advised him to seek additional partners while the government studied the issue more carefully; Warmbold to Brown, 29 April 1932, R 2/16815, BA-B; Grobba, “Finanzierung des deutschen Anteils an der B.O.D.,” 26 May 1932, R 92245, PAAA. Information about Brown is meager, but his activities in Iran during the 1920s are examined in Rashid Khatib-Shahidi, *German Foreign Policy towards Iran before World War II: Political Relations, Economic Influence and the Bank of Persia* (London: Tauris, 2012), pp. 47ff, 182.
  38. Mejcher, *Die Politik und das Öl*, pp. 108–17. The composition of the German consortium is summarized in “Irak—Transaktion,” n.d. [ca. 1932], R 2/16815, BA-B. For a good summation of the state of affairs at the beginning of 1934, see Koehler, “Deutsche Beteiligung an der Oelkonzession westlich des Tigris im Irak,” 10 January 1934, R 3101/20320, BA-B. See also Meier-Dörnberg, *Ölversorgung der Kriegsmarine*, p. 35ff.
  39. Besides the sources below, see Mejcher, *Die Politik und das Öl*, pp. 125–45.
  40. Hitler had announced his commitment to rearmament, conscription, and the “occupation of living space in the east” as well as its “ruthless Germanization” to the leaders of the German army and navy in February 1933—barely a week after taking office; Thilo



- Vogelsang, "Neue Dokumente zur Geschichte der Reichswehr," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 2, no. 4 (1954), pp. 434–36. A few months later, the new government adopted an ambitious eight-year military spending program that would consume between 5 and 10 percent of gross domestic product per annum; Tooze, *Wages of Destruction*, pp. 53–55. The growth in the size of the navy was considerable—a fivefold rise in manpower (16,450 to 78,892) and twelvefold budgetary increase (187,000,000 RM to 2,389,000,000 RM) between 1932 and 1939; MGFA, *Build-Up of German Aggression*, pp. 456–57.
41. Bentz, "Geologische Begutachtung der Erdölkonzession der British Oil Development Cy. Ltd. Mosul (Iraq)," 18 June 1935, BGR 49074.
  42. Mejcher, *Die Politik und das Öl*, p. 137.
  43. Minister of Economics, "Deutsche Beteiligung an der Oelkonzessionsgesellschaft im Irak," 26 June 1935, R 92246, PAAA; Minister of Finance, "Deutsche Beteiligung an der Mossul Oil Fields Co Ltd," 31 July 1935, R2/16816, BA-B.
  44. For that reason, he was also a major backer of the German synthetic-fuel industry. For background on Schacht's policies, see Tooze, *Wages of Destruction*, pp. 86–96, 115–20.
  45. Schacht to Krosigk, "Deutsche Beteiligung an der BOD," 13 July 1935, R 92246, PAAA; Grobba to the Foreign Office, "Eisenbahnbau der B.O.D. von ihren Ölfeldern nach Tel-Kotchek," 19 July 1935, T-77/645 (Wi/Vi. 13a, b), NARA; Pelte to Krosigk, "Deutsche Beteiligung an der BOD," 29 July 1935, R 2/16816, BA-B; Nasse and Härtig, "Deutsche Beteiligung an der Ölgewinnung im Irak," 23 August 1935, R2/16816, BA-B; Schacht to Krosigk, "Deutsche Beteiligung an der B.O.D.," 6 December 1935, R 92247, PAAA. See also Meier-Dörnberg, *Ölversorgung der Kriegsmarine*, pp. 36–38.
  46. Armed Forces Office, Defense-Economy Bureau, "Vortragsnotiz über Einfuhr von Iraköl," 6 August 1935, T-77/645 (Wi/Vi. 13a, b), NARA.
  47. Nasse and Härtig, "Deutsche Beteiligung an der Ölgewinnung im Irak"; Minister of Finance, "Neuanträge der Ferrostaal," 6 November 1935; both in R2/16816, BA-B.
  48. Krosigk to Schacht, "Deutsche Beteiligung an der BOD," 14 December 1935, T-77/645 (Wi/Vi. 13a, b), NARA.
  49. Schniewind to Prüfer, Thomas, Fetzer, and Nasse, "Deutsche Beteiligung an der BOD," 10 December 1935, R 92247, PAAA.
  50. One sticking point was whether Ferrostaal had sufficient funds to take over the BOD and pursue construction of both a railway and pipeline to the Mediterranean; Griebel, "Aktenvermerk über eine Besprechung im R.Wi.Min. am 16.12.1935," 28 December 1935, T-77/645 (Wi/Vi. 13a, b), NARA. A representative of Ferrostaal's sister company assured the Armed Forces Office that neither the political nor the financial obstacles were insurmountable. Thomas to Reusch, 25 September 1935; Reusch to Thomas, 1 October 1935; and Thomas to Reusch, 9 October 1935; all in T-77/645 (Wi/Vi. 13a, b), NARA.
  51. Finance Ministry, "Deutsche Beteiligung an der Mosul Oil Fields: Besprechung in RWiM v. 23.9.36," 24 September 1936, R2/16816, BA-B. Davis sweetened the deal by offering to provide oil from alternative sources on a clearing basis until production began in Iraq and to refine future imports of Iraqi oil in a refinery he owned in Hamburg, which he would sell to the German navy on a long-term contract; Meier-Dörnberg, *Ölversorgung der Kriegsmarine*, pp. 37–38.
  52. Raeder to Krosigk, "Deutsche Beteiligung an der BOD," 13 January 1936; "Ausführungen zu dem Projekt Mosul Oil Field Company," enclosed with Raeder to Krosigk, "Deutsche Beteiligung an der BOD," 29 January 1936, R 2/16816, BA-B; both reprinted in Mejcher, *Die Politik und das Öl*, pp. 235–46 (see also pp. 138–40, 142–43). Trading shares of Iraqi oil for Latin American oil appears to have been the preference of Schacht as well; Ritter, "Aktenvermerk," 3 December 1936, T-120/2433, NARA.
  53. Raeder to Keitel et al., "Ölversorgung der Kriegsmarine."
  54. No full record of the meeting exists. A minute to Krosigk makes no mention of Keppler's position and only summarizes the navy's position. Minute for Krosigk, 26 March 1936, R 2/16816, BA-B.
  55. Keppler dismissed Raeder's criticism, surmising that the artless admiral had clearly

- been led astray by someone who was "at the very least careless with the trust of others"; Keppler to Funk, 15 May 1940, enclosed with Funk to Raeder, 6 June 1940, T-77/211 (Wi/IF 5.1082), NARA. See also Meier-Dörnberg, *Ölversorgung der Kriegsmarine*, p. 43 note 120.
56. Finance Ministry, "Irak-Oel-Konsortium"; Mejcher, *Die Politik und das Öl*, pp. 124–25.
  57. The Finance Ministry was not convinced. Until a way could be found to move the oil via pipeline, the operating costs of the BOD would be exorbitant; anyway, too little oil could be transported to the Mediterranean for the company to be profitable; minute for Krosigk, "Irak Industriekonsortium: Deutsche Beteiligung an der BOD," 31 January 1936, R 2/16816, BA-B. The disagreements between the Naval High Command and the Finance Ministry are summarized in Raeder to Krosigk et al., "Ölversorgung der Kriegsmarine," 27 June 1940, T-1022/3405 (PG 31762/B), NARA. Schacht's enthusiasm also began to wane, because of his mistrust for Davis. Finally, the legality of Ferrostaal's plan was in question, owing to a lawsuit in London; Mejcher, *Die Politik und das Öl*, pp. 143–45.
  58. Mejcher, *Die Politik und das Öl*, p. 143; Ruprecht, "Italien und das albanische Erdöl," *Militär-Wochenblatt* 125, no. 33 (14 February 1941).
  59. Grobba to the Foreign Office, "Inhalt der Iraq Petroleum Company an der British Oil Development Company," 23 October 1936, enclosed with Foreign Office to the Economics Ministry et al., 30 October 1936, R 2/16816, BA-B, reprinted in Mejcher, *Die Politik und das Öl*, pp. 247–53; Grobba, *Männer und Mächte*, p. 94.
  60. Helmut Mejcher, "Die britische Erdölpolitik im Nahen Osten, 1914–1956," *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 59, no. 3 (1972), p. 368; Mejcher, *Kampf der Mächte und Konzerne vor dem Zweiten Weltkrieg*, p. 143; Meier-Dörnberg, *Ölversorgung der Kriegsmarine*, pp. 38–39; Zetzsche, "Logistik und Operationen," pp. 66–67. Unfortunately, the relevant volume of the history of BP deals with the BOD only superficially and does not mention the Second Italo-Abyssinian War; James Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company*, vol. 2, *The Anglo-Iranian Years, 1928–1954* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994), pp. 162–70.
  61. Mejcher, *Die Politik und das Öl*, p. 145.
  62. Jäger, "Memorandum über die Mosul Oil Fields Ltd." See also Bamberg, *Anglo-Iranian Years*, p. 170, and A. E. Gunther, "The German War for Crude Oil," *Petroleum Times* (27 March 1948), pp. 319–20.
  63. The German government tried to convince Ferrostaal either to maintain a minority interest or to sell its stake to another group of German firms. But the suicide of Thomas Brown (who had handled negotiations with the other partners in the BOD) and Ferrostaal's lack of interest in the oil business ruled out further German participation. Finance Ministry, "Deutsche Beteiligung an der Mosul Oil Fields," 24 September 1936.
  64. The Economics Ministry had agreed to this concession in a letter to the Naval High Command of 22 March 1937, which is referenced in Raeder to Göring, "Erwerb von Erdölkonzessionen in Mexiko," 9 September 1938, T-77/418 (Wi/IF 5.3326), NARA.
  65. The German minister to Mexico blanched at the thought of provoking the United States in such a manner and quickly declined the offer; A. A. Fursenko, *The Battle for Oil: The Economics and Politics of International Corporate Conflict over Petroleum* (Greenwich, Conn.: JAI, 1990), pp. 149, 156–57; Friedrich Katz, *The Secret War in Mexico: Europe, the United States, and the Mexican Revolution* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1981), pp. 203–205, 240–43. The Deutsche Bank's corporate strategy between 1906 and 1912 is summarized in Nowell, *Mercantile States and the World Oil Cartel*, pp. 61–72. Nowell does not mention the role of Mexico; in his account, the still-undiscovered oil fields of Mesopotamia (Iraq) would be the instrument by which Germany freed itself from dependence on U.S.-controlled oil.
  66. "Besprechung über die Frage des Erwerbs von Erdölkonzessionen in Süd- und Mittelamerika am 14. April 1937," BGR 49022; German Foreign Office to the German Legation in Mexico, 25 May 1937, quoted in Volland, *Das Dritte Reich und Mexiko*, pp. 89–90.

67. Meier-Dörnberg, *Ölversorgung der Kriegsmarine*, p. 32.
68. Weissmüller to Burandt, "Petroleum Concession in Mexico," 26 September 1936, enclosed with Fetzer to the Foreign Ministry, "Petroleum Concession in Mexico," 21 October 1936, document no. 619, in *Auswärtiges Amt, Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918–1945, Series C* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1957–1983), vol. 5, pp. 1130–32.
69. Volland, *Das Dritte Reich und Mexiko*, pp. 86–99. Relations had cooled between the two countries between 1936 and 1938 over the Spanish Civil War and Mexican criticism of Germany's aggressive foreign policy. *Ibid.*, pp. 43–82.
70. Besides the sources cited below, the following discussion is drawn from *ibid.*, pp. 103–54.
71. Clayton Koppes, "The Good Neighbor Policy and the Nationalization of Mexican Oil: A Reinterpretation," *Journal of American History* 69, no. 1 (1982), pp. 62–81; Lorenzo Meyer, "The Expropriation and Great Britain," in *The Mexican Petroleum Industry in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Jonathan Brown and Allan Knight (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1992), pp. 154–72; Volland, *Das Dritte Reich und Mexiko*, pp. 116–22.
72. Raeder to Göring, "Erwerb von Erdölkonzessionen in Mexiko"; Raeder to Keitel et al., "Ölversorgung der Kriegsmarine." For the role of the Dresdner Bank, see Christopher Simpson, ed., *War Crimes of the Deutsche Bank and the Dresdner Bank: Office of the Military Government (U.S.) Reports* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 2002), pp. 284–87.
73. Raeder to Keitel et al., "Ölversorgung der Kriegsmarine."
74. Volland, *Das Dritte Reich und Mexiko*, p. 104.
75. Funk, "Stellungnahme . . .," 6 June 1940, enclosed with Funk to Raeder, 6 June 1940 [emphasis original].
76. Armed Forces High Command, Defense-Economy Staff, "Aktennotiz auf Grund einer Besprechung mit Herrn Ministerialrat Dr. Fetzer OKM betr. Ölversorgung"; Volland, *Das Dritte Reich und Mexiko*, pp. 104–105, 131–32.
77. The companies had apparently been "complaining" about the navy's concession hunting. Raeder to Keitel et al., "Ölversorgung der Kriegsmarine."
78. The German navy had declined an undeveloped oil concession held by Otto Wolff AG in Ecuador, precisely because it was only interested in oil fields near the Atlantic coast and considered it "uneconomical" to transport oil from the Pacific coast since it would have to travel through the Panama Canal; "Besprechung am 12. November 1937 über Erdölkonzession der Firma Otto Wolff in Ecuador," 18 November 1937, BGR 49022. For further details, see Eichholtz and Kockel, *Von Krieg zu Krieg*, pp. 171–79.
79. Bentz was enamored of the prospects around Poza Rica and the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. He ruled out territories along the "Golden Lane" in Veracruz, where starting in 1908 prospectors had discovered massive oil fields that were now nearing exhaustion, as well as more risky territories under state control that would require extensive investment in terms of exploration or infrastructure development; "Bericht ueber die Moeglichkeiten von Erdoelbeteiligungen in Mexiko," 30 October 1936, BGR 49035; "Bericht über den Stand der Verhandlungen über Ölmöglichkeiten in Mexiko," 10 November 1937, BGR 49038; "Beteiligungsmöglichkeiten an mexikanischen Ölfeldern (Reise September/Okttober 1937)," 15 January 1938, BGR 49044. Bentz also agreed to serve as the navy's representative in negotiations with the Mexican government; Naval High Command to Göring, "Erwerb von Erdölkonzessionen in Mexiko," 28 November 1938, enclosed with Naval High Command to the Armed Forces Command, "Erwerb von Erdölkonzessionen in Mexiko," 28 November 1938, T-77/671 (Wi/Vi. 236), NARA.
80. Raeder to Göring, "Erwerb von Erdölkonzessionen in Mexiko"; Raeder to Göring, "Erwerb von Erdölkonzessionen in Mexiko [sic]," 12 December 1938, T-77/645 (Wi/Vi. 13a, b), NARA. See also Armed Forces High Command, Defense-Economy Staff, "Aktennotiz auf Grund einer Besprechung mit Herrn Ministerialrat Dr. Fetzer OKM betr. Ölversorgung"; and Raeder to Keitel et al., "Ölversorgung der Kriegsmarine." Until the summer of 1938, the German navy's wartime planning focused primarily on the demands of waging a conflict against France or the Soviet Union;

- Salewski, *Deutsche Seekriegsleitung*, pp. 20–38. Even after war against Britain became likely, the navy continued to hope that Latin America could serve as a staging area; Meier-Dörnberg, *Ölversorgung der Kriegsmarine*, pp. 44–48. That the German navy might continue to purchase supplies of oil from overseas in wartime was not out of the question if it could do so through Italy. In fact, as of November 1939, the navy still had fifty thousand tons of diesel stored abroad, primarily in Spain and the Soviet Union. Moreover, the navy hoped to purchase oil from Mexico or the United States using surreptitious dollar reserves in Switzerland and New York (\$476,200, plus an additional \$711,300 stored at home); attachment to Grassman to the Naval Warfare Staff, 6 December 1939, T-1022/1735 (PG 32198a), NARA.
81. Funk to the Naval High Command, 5 December 1938; Naval High Command to Funk, “Ölbezüge aus Mexiko . . .,” 27 December 1938; attachments 1, 2 to Raeder to Funk et al., 27 June 1940. See also Meier-Dörnberg, *Ölversorgung der Kriegsmarine*, pp. 41–42.
  82. The Naval High Command did not help its case by refusing to coordinate with the Armed Forces High Command: Raw Materials Department to Defense-Economy Staff, “Erwerb von Erdölkonzessionen in Mexiko durch OKM,” 27 September 1938; Armed Forces High Command, Defense-Economy Staff, “Devisenantrag OKM für Ölkonzessionen in Mexiko,” 30 September 1938; both in T-77/671 (Wi/VI. 236), NARA. In spite of the navy’s behavior, the Armed Forces High Command considered the proposal to be “desirable” and supported the expenditure of £600,000; Keitel, “Erwerb von Erdölkonzessionen in Mexiko,” 5 October 1938, T-77/671 (Wi/VI. 236), NARA. The navy’s secretiveness over its intentions—such as plans to refine Mexican oil in a refinery on the Spanish Canary Islands or to stockpile fuel abroad in secret depots—contributed to other agencies’ mistrust; Meier-Dörnberg, *Ölversorgung der Kriegsmarine*, p. 40; Zetzsche, “Logistik und Operationen,” p. 61.
  83. Davis had been promoting closer economic relations between Mexico and the Third Reich since 1934 and had arranged for a geological mission to Mexico under Bentz’s leadership in 1936; Clemm to das Auswaertige Amt, “W. R. Davis, Boston,” 16 April 1936, R 92247, PAAA. For more on Davis’s early efforts, which succeeded in garnering the official German support for the construction of a refinery in Hamburg to process imported oil from Mexico, see Volland, *Das Dritte Reich und Mexiko*, pp. 83–86. According to the U.S. State Department, Davis and the German navy had agreed to the sale of 300,000 tons of Mexican oil, with payment split sixty/forty between “Askimarks” and foreign exchange; U.S. Consulate, Bremen, to the secretary of state, “The German Oil Industry,” 5 September 1938, no. 133, Record Group 59, General Records of the Department of State, 862.6363/183, NARA.
  84. Not everyone in Germany trusted Davis—the Finance Ministry and Schacht did not want him to play any role in Iraq through the BOD; minute by the Finance Ministry, 26 March 1936, R2/16816, BA-B. German intelligence had its own doubts about Davis, claiming that his company’s “interests now turn more towards the French Government than the German”; Reich Main Security Office to Keppler, “Firma Davis u. Co., New York,” 11 September 1939, T-120/2677, NARA. Davis died suddenly of a heart attack in Houston in August 1941, possibly assassinated by British intelligence; William Stevenson, *A Man Called Intrepid: The Secret War* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), pp. 289–95. For more on Davis’s colorful history, see Dale Harrington, *Mystery Man: William Rhodes Davis, Nazi Agent of Influence* (London: Brassey’s, 2001).
  85. Volland, *Das Dritte Reich und Mexiko*, pp. 133–36; Zetzsche, “Logistik und Operationen,” pp. 73–80. According to the Economics Ministry, Shell and Standard had requested only a “restriction” of the oil trade with Mexico. Economics Minister Walther Funk complained that the navy had misrepresented the oil companies’ offer as a demand for the complete cessation of all oil sales with Mexico. Funk, “Stellungnahme. . .”
  86. Raeder to Keitel et al., “Ölversorgung der Kriegsmarine”; Volland, *Das Dritte Reich und Mexiko*, p. 139.
  87. Funk, “Stellungnahme. . .”
  88. Volland, *Das Dritte Reich und Mexiko*, pp. 156–74, 199–200.

89. Ibid., pp. 121, 139–40, 154–56. The Germans never followed through on their end of the barter exchange (delivery of oil tankers); Gunther, “German War for Crude Oil,” p. 319.
90. Meier-Dörnberg, *Ölversorgung der Kriegsmarine*, p. 41 note 111; British Chiefs of Staff Committee, Technical Sub-Committee on Axis Oil, *Oil as a Factor in the German War Effort, 1933–1945*, 8 March 1946, A.O. (46) 1, p. 84, retrieved from the Digital Library of the Combined Arms Research Library, Fort Leavenworth, Kans.
91. Meier-Dörnberg, *Ölversorgung der Kriegsmarine*, p. 30.
92. Raeder to Funk et al., 27 June 1940; Meier-Dörnberg, *Ölversorgung der Kriegsmarine*, pp. 43–44; Raeder, *Mein Leben*, pp. 63–64; Zetzsche, “Logistik und Operationen,” pp. 56–57. Funk was so infuriated by Raeder’s note of 27 June 1940 that he refused to discuss the matter any further; Funk to Raeder, 11 July 1940, T-77/211 (Wi/IF 5.1082), NARA.
93. Raeder, *Mein Leben*, p. 63.
94. USSBS, *Oil in Japan’s War* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1946), pp. 11–16; Jack Greene and Alessandro Massignani, *The Naval War in the Mediterranean, 1940–1943* (London: Chatham, 1998), pp. 142–44. The Italians imported 1,303,328 tons of petroleum from Germany and Romania between 1940 and 1943, but even this did not suffice to maintain the Italian navy at a state of full operational readiness.
95. USSBS, *Oil Division*, p. 17.
96. The fuel oil situation would deteriorate considerably in the event of new naval construction and thereafter depend on the security of existing synthetic facilities, further expansion of synthetic output, and continued imports from overland suppliers. Attachment to Grassman to the Naval Warfare Staff, 6 December 1939.
97. Chiefs of Staff Committee, *Oil as a Factor in the German War Effort*, p. 84.
98. See Robert Goralski and Russell Freeburg, *Oil & War: How the Deadly Struggle for Fuel in WWII Meant Victory or Defeat* (New York: Morrow, 1987), pp. 13–26, which was one of the primary sources for Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money, and Power* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), pp. 328–50.
99. Meier-Dörnberg, *Ölversorgung der Kriegsmarine*, p. 43.
100. See Anand Toprani, “Germany’s Answer to Standard Oil: The Continental Oil Company and Nazi Grand Strategy, 1940–1942,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 37, nos. 6–7 (December 2014), pp. 949–73.
101. Much of the navy’s ineffectiveness stemmed from its leadership’s disparagement of naval aviation and submarines in favor of surface ships before the war. Murray, *Change in the European Balance of Power*, pp. 45–47.
102. USSBS, *German Oil Industry*, p. 23.
103. MGFA, *Build-Up of German Aggression*, pp. 457–58.
104. Williamson Murray, “The Luftwaffe before the Second World War: A Mission, a Strategy?,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 4, no. 3 (1981), pp. 261–70, esp. 268.



# FROGMEN AGAINST A FLEET

## The Italian Attack on Alexandria 18/19 December 1941

*Vincent P. O'Hara and Enrico Cernuschi*

**I**n March 1939 Italy's Regia Marina established a specialized and secret naval warfare unit called Decima Flottiglia MAS (Motoscafo Anti Sommergibili), generally known as the 10th Light Flotilla or X MAS. This unit was innovative, in that it employed selected, highly trained personnel using special weapons and delivery systems to conduct sneak attacks. On the night of 18 December 1941, six members of this unit penetrated the main British naval base in the eastern Mediterranean at Alexandria, Egypt, and disabled the Mediterranean Fleet's two battleships, a tanker, and a destroyer. In few military endeavors has so little been

risked to achieve so much. This article examines the Alexandria action and some of the factors that contributed to its success. It also considers how this action applies to today's threat environment.<sup>1</sup>

The concept of using stealth and unconventional weapons to strike enemy forces, especially in port, is an old one. The American *Turtle*'s daring 1776 endeavor against the British ship of the line *Eagle* is a case in point; Paraguay's use of canoes to attack a flotilla of Brazilian ironclads during the War of the Triple Alliance (1866–70) is another. Italy's innovation, beginning in the First World War, was to institutionalize what had typically been an ad hoc form of attack by creating special units, weapons, and doctrine. Italy never intended that unconventional weapons should replace the battle fleet, only that they supplement it by providing a

*Vincent P. O'Hara of Chula Vista, California, is a naval historian and the author most recently of In Passage Perilous: Malta and the Convoy Battles of June 1942 (2013); coauthor with Enrico Cernuschi of Black Phoenix: History and Operations of the Marina Repubblicana 1943–1945 (2014); and editor of On Seas Contested: The Seven Great Navies of the Second World War (2010). His work has also appeared in periodicals and annuals including Warship, MHQ, and Storia Militare. He holds a history degree from the University of California, Berkeley.*

*Enrico Cernuschi of Pavia, Italy, is a naval historian and the author of twenty books, most recently "Ultra": La fine di un mito (2014). He is the coauthor (with Erminio Bagnasco) of Le navi da guerra Italiane 1940–1945 (2003) and (with Vincent O'Hara) of Black Phoenix. Mr. Cernuschi's work has appeared in publications including Rivista Marittima, Storia Militare, and Warship.*

capability for hitting targets the fleet could not reach. During World War II the Italian battle fleet's reach was the range of its escorting destroyers, about five hundred nautical miles—as far east as Crete or Tobruk or the vicinity of Bône to the west. Alexandria and Gibraltar, the two principal British naval bases in the Mediterranean, were far beyond this battle zone and also beyond range of any but harassment air raids. Italy's naval command had one weapon capable of attacking British units in these bases—X MAS.

### A BRIEF HISTORY

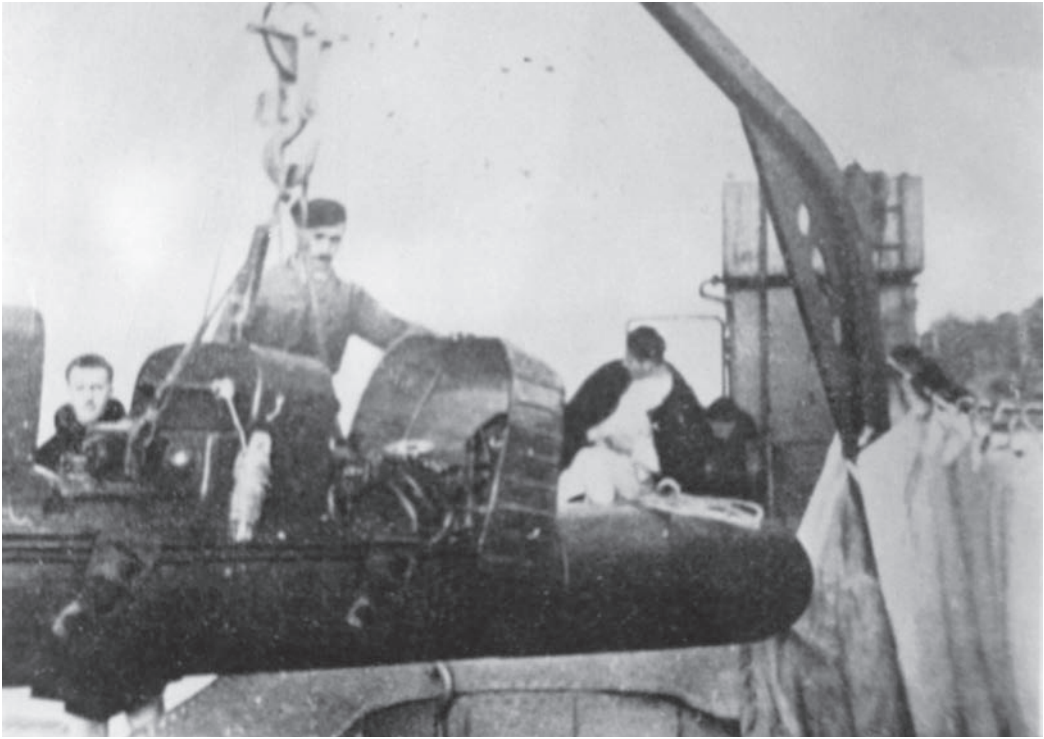
In the First World War the Italian navy made many stealthy attempts to penetrate Austro-Hungarian naval bases using small units and special weapons. It achieved several successes, climaxed by the sinking of the dreadnought *Viribus Unitis* on 1 November 1918 by a Mignatta semisubmersible, two-man attack craft. When the prospect of war against Great Britain arose in 1935 a cadre of naval officers looked to this precedent and championed unconventional weapons as representing a way to offset the British Royal Navy's battleship superiority. Benito Mussolini, Italy's head of government, and the navy's chief of staff, Admiral Domenico Cavagnari, who himself had participated in a special operation to penetrate Pola on 1 November 1916, endorsed these proposals and allowed research programs to go forward.

The cadre of officers proceeded to develop or refine a variety of special weapons, such as small motor “crash” boats packed with explosives in their bows. There were midget submarines and two-man motorboats armed with one or two torpedoes.<sup>2</sup> The weapon used to attack Alexandria was the *siluro a lenta corsa* (slow-running torpedo, or SLC). It was twenty-six feet long (see photo 1) and twenty-one inches in diameter. An electric motor gave it a range of fifteen miles at 2.3 knots and a maximum speed of three knots. The detachable warhead contained 660 pounds (three hundred kilograms) of explosives. Although the SLC was superficially similar to the Mignatta, it took advantage of new technology, a self-contained breathing device known as the ARO (*autorespiratore ad ossigeno*), or oxygen breathing apparatus. This was a rebreather system that predated the Aqua-Lung and had the advantage of not leaving telltale bubbles.<sup>3</sup> While the SLC operated best just breaking the surface, like the Mignatta, the ARO allowed its operators to submerge the craft as deep as fifteen meters. Thus, the SLC represented a capacity that had not existed before, it was cheap, it was expendable, it was stealthy, and in 1940 it was unique.

The SLC was colloquially called a *maiale* (pig) by its operators, because it was difficult to use and subject to breakdowns. The men who rode this device into combat had to be excellent swimmers with strong lungs. Their training was intensive. Commander Junio Valerio Borghese (who began the war as captain of the



## PHOTO 1



SLC of the series used at Alexandria being slung on board a pontoon.

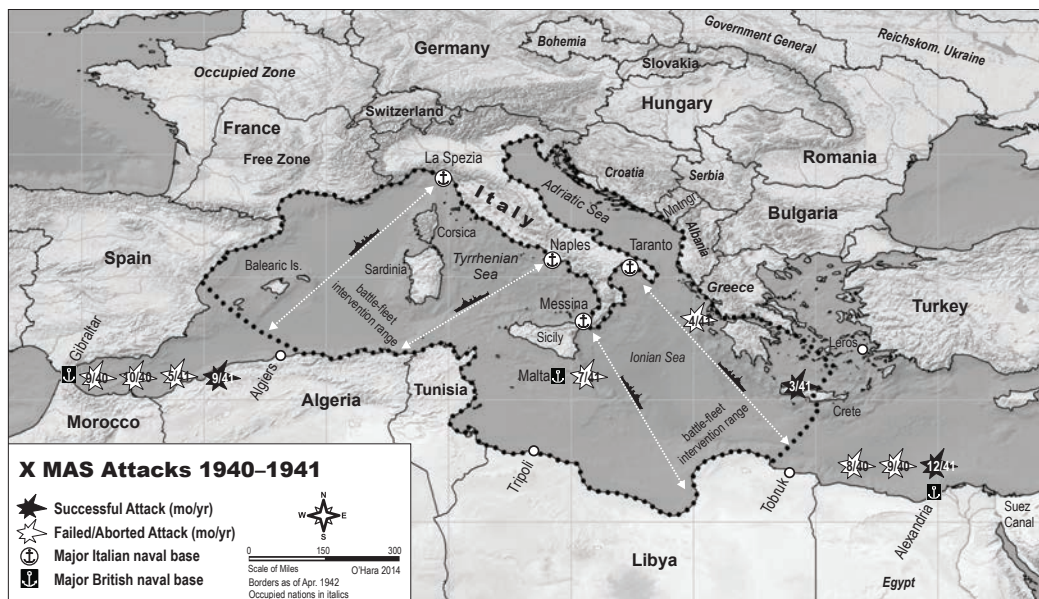
Both photos Ufficio Storico della Marina Militare, Rome, used by permission

submarine *Scirè* and became the commander of X MAS and later in 1944 of the Marina Repubblicana, the post-armistice naval force of Mussolini's Repubblica Sociale Italiana) characterized training as “continuous and drastic under difficulties even harder than those expected in action against the enemy.” A U.S. Navy report produced shortly after the Italian armistice confirmed that SLC operators required six to eight months of training and that “these training periods presume that the trainee [already] has certain special qualifications.”<sup>4</sup>

The original strategic concept behind the Italian special-weapons program was to attack simultaneously every major British Mediterranean base on the war's first day, before the enemy had any hint of the weapons it faced. However, Italy declared war on 10 June 1940, long before its armed forces were ready. In the case of X MAS, “given the relative unreliability of the assault equipment and breathing equipment, insufficient numbers, and equipment worn out by intense training, it was not until 10 August . . . that the chief of staff ordered [the first operation].”<sup>5</sup> Instead of a simultaneous, decisive blow, because of Mussolini's belief that the war would be short X MAS was committed piecemeal and prematurely.

For the first special assault action (see map 1), scheduled for the night of 25/26 August 1940, the targets were the Mediterranean Fleet's three battleships and

MAP 1



aircraft carrier in Alexandria. The submarine *Iride* sailed to the Gulf of Bomba in Libya and met there a torpedo boat bringing four SLCs. British aircraft foiled this operation when a flight of three Swordfish from HMS *Eagle* sank *Iride* on 21 August, just after it had fastened the SLCs to its deck and was about to conduct a test dive preliminary to departing for Alexandria (the SLCs could not withstand water pressure at depths greater than thirty meters). However, the survivors, who included X MAS personnel, were eventually able to recover the SLCs (as well as seven trapped crewmen) from the wreck, which had settled on the bottom at a depth of fifteen meters.

The next attempt was a double operation against Alexandria and Gibraltar scheduled for late September 1940. For this mission two submarines, *Gondar* and *Scirè*, were modified to carry three SLCs each in special canisters fitted to their decks. This adaptation allowed the submarines to dive deeper, because the canisters had the same pressure resistance as the submarines. The mission, however, was aborted after intelligence discovered that the targeted warships were away from port. British forces sank *Gondar* on 29 September as it was returning to base from the vicinity of Alexandria; its crew and embarked X MAS personnel were lost or captured.

On 30 October 1940 the surviving modified submarine, *Scirè*, successfully released three SLCs off Gibraltar. One, whose compass did not function, was forced during its approach by a patrol boat to submerge. The patrol boat dropped an explosive charge nearby, and the concussion caused the SLC to lose depth keeping and plunge to the bottom, where water pressure collapsed it. The second

SLC made it to the boom, but when the operator tried to submerge he found that his ARO and the backup were both inoperative. Consequently, he could not submerge; he scuttled his craft so as not to jeopardize the other attackers. The third SLC likewise had a faulty ARO, as well as a leak in its battery compartment that reduced its speed and compromised its buoyancy. Nonetheless, it penetrated the harbor barrier on the surface. However, when the operator, Lieutenant Gino Birindelli, submerged for the final approach to his target, the battleship *Barham*, his SLC became stuck on the bottom about thirty meters short. Dismounting, he was unable to pull it close enough before carbon monoxide poisoning overcame him. The charge's explosion caused no damage, and he and his fellow operator (who had previously run out of oxygen) were captured. (The other four operators made it to Spain and thence back to Italy.) Although the captured operators did not disclose any information, the British observed the recovery of the SLCs washed up on Spanish territory and appreciated them to be some type of manned torpedo.

These setbacks led to system improvements, intensified training, and the exploration of other attack methods. In March 1941 X MAS deployed six one-man crash boats known as MTMs against British units at Suda Bay, Crete, and sank the heavy cruiser *York* and the tanker *Pericles*. An April 1941 operation against the Greek port of Corfu involving the first use of the torpedo-armed boats known as MTSs was a failure. Defects foiled another effort by *Scirè* and its three SLCs against Gibraltar on 27 May 1941. The battleships were at sea, so the raid was launched against commercial shipping anchored in deep water. One SLC could not start its engine and had to be scuttled. The other two were lost owing to accidents (one operator lost consciousness, causing his SLC to sink, while the other suddenly plunged to the bottom as the warhead was about to be detached). All six operators landed safely in Spain.

A large-scale operation followed in July when *MAS 451* and *452* (24.5-ton motor torpedo boats accompanied by a 1.9-ton, two-man MTS torpedo boat), nine 1.3-ton MTM crash boats, and two SLCs (carried on board an adapted motorboat called an MTL) attacked Malta.<sup>6</sup> Radar (a capacity the Italians lacked and of which they were largely unaware) having detected the force en route, the attackers encountered an alerted defense. They lost all craft committed save the MTS and suffered fifteen killed, including the unit's commander, and eighteen captured. This was a great blow to X MAS. The surface elements needed reconstitution, but *Scirè* and most of the same SLC operators who had participated in the May operation conducted another strike against Gibraltar on 20 September. Two crews failed to penetrate the military harbor, being delayed by wind and then by the need to avoid patrol boats. Instead, they attacked merchant shipping in the commercial harbor and sank *Fiona Shell* (2,444 gross register tons, or GRT) and *Durham* (10,900 GRT). The third craft did penetrate the harbor but having been

seriously delayed in the process settled on a larger tanker rather than a battleship. The operator could have attacked a cruiser, but X MAS command believed that leaking oil from a tanker could be ignited by small explosive charges, thus causing more harm. The SLC successfully attached a charge to the Royal Fleet Auxiliary oiler *Denbydale* (8,145 GRT), and the subsequent explosion broke the ship's back. Although disappointing in terms of its original goals, this successful attack confirmed—both to its operators and to its targets—the SLC's potential. A breathing apparatus recovered near *Fiona Shell* led the British to conclude that the probable cause of the attack had been “two man submarines.” The port admiral replied to an Admiralty inquiry about his defensive measures that “until improvement could be designed and made to net defences, security of the harbour against miniature submarines depended on firing of explosive charges in the entrance. This is now being done at both gates by separate boats at very short intervals.”<sup>7</sup>

### THE SITUATION

By the end of 1941 Italy was losing a desperate struggle to supply the Italo-German army in North Africa. A combination of surface ships, aircraft, and submarines was so effectively blocking Italian shipping that in the month of November 1941 only 38 percent of materiel (29,813 of 79,208 tons) sent to Libya arrived.<sup>8</sup> The Italian high command plotted a number of actions to redress the situation. These included changes to convoying patterns, the use of the battle fleet to escort convoys, and an SLC attack against the British naval base at Alexandria. By this time, X MAS had fifteen months of wartime experience. Its equipment, especially the SLCs and AROs, had been modified to account for problems that had affected past missions. Despite the several failures, morale was high, and every SLC operator in the force volunteered for the Alexandria mission.

On 3 December 1941 *Scirè*, under Borghese, departed La Spezia ostensibly on an ordinary training cruise. That night, well away from shore, a lighter loaded with three SLCs rendezvoused with the six-hundred-ton submarine. After fitting the SLCs into their canisters, *Scirè* proceeded to the Italian base of Leros in the Aegean. It tried to avoid contact with enemy vessels, but there was one close call: on 9 December an aircraft of the Royal Air Force 201st Group sighted *Scirè* on the surface. The Italian crew greeted the enemy aircraft with waves and the day's correct Aldis-lamp recognition signal. The aircraft reported: “A U-boat bearing ‘GONDAR2’ features was spotted South of Crete. . . . This particular U-boat was challenged by the aircraft and answered with a green light signal which was the correct signal for the day; she was therefore not molested.”<sup>9</sup> The submarine knew the correct signal because Italian naval intelligence had broken the Royal Navy tactical code, designated QBC, which was used to communicate such information.<sup>10</sup>

On 12 December the SLC operators flew from Italy to Leros and met *Scirè* there. They had traveled separately because experience had shown that special-craft crews reacted poorly to prolonged submarine voyages, because the recycled air and lack of exercise compromised their all-important lung capacity. On 14 December, in the dark of the moon, *Scirè* sailed for Alexandria. After receiving final confirmation that the battleships were in port, Borghese maneuvered to the preplanned position, 2,400 meters off the Eastern (commercial) Harbor.

The Allied intelligence source ULTRA had given little hint of the operation, because the main Italian naval ciphers and codes were secure. The decryption of a German report regarding a reconnaissance flight over Alexandria led the Admiralty to issue a general attack warning to Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham on the afternoon of the 18th. A member of the crew of the battleship *Queen Elizabeth*, Midshipman Frank Wade, later recalled that the crew was mustered on the quarterdeck that evening and warned to watch out for anything suspicious. However, "The reaction in the mess was one of unconcern. How the devil did they think that they could penetrate a harbour as well protected and defended as this one was, with its very substantial entrance boom? We further consoled ourselves with thoughts of proverbial Italian inefficiency, and by ten o'clock had forgotten all about the matter."<sup>11</sup>

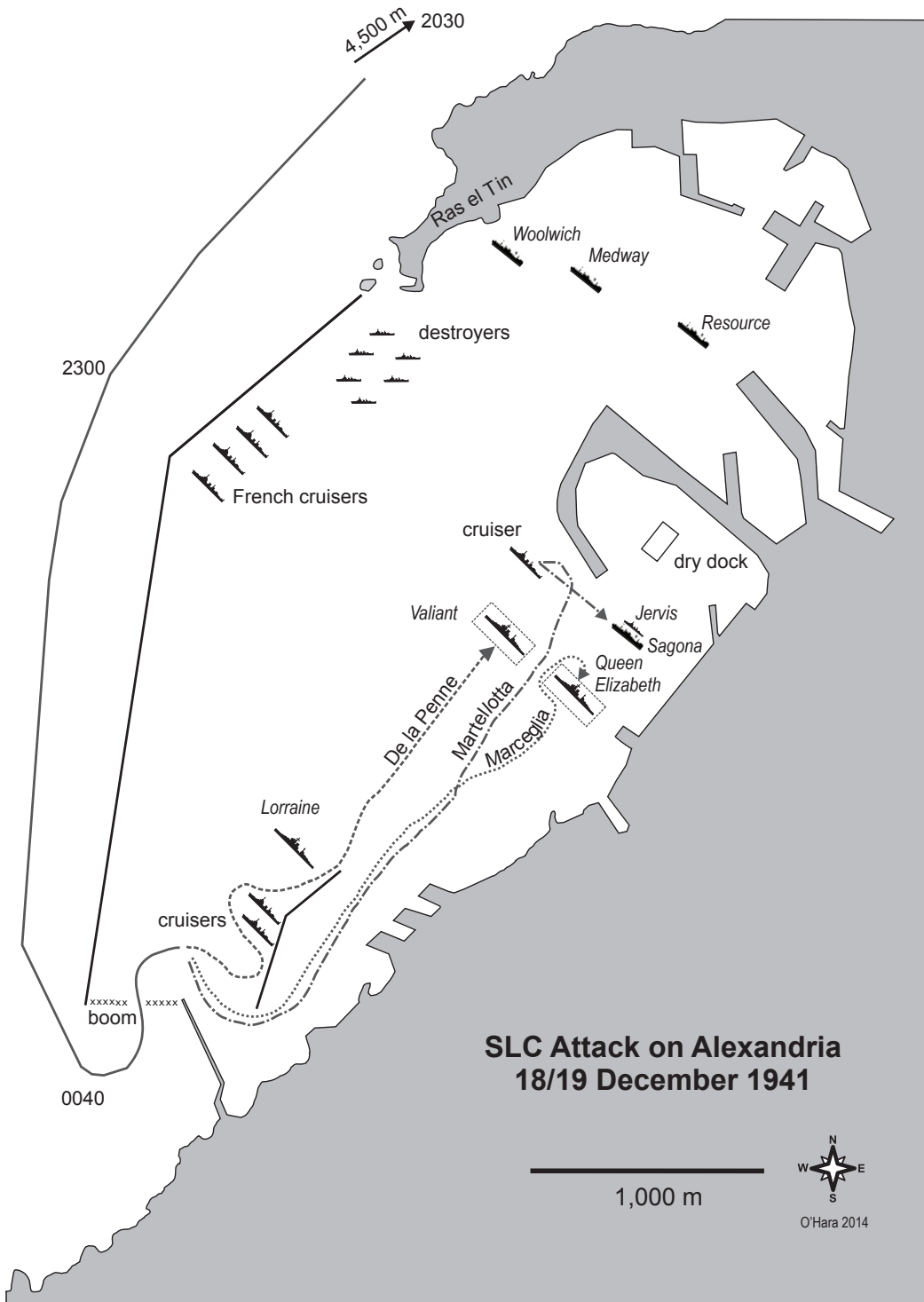
That very evening, at 2030 (8:30 PM) on 18 December, *Scirè* released the SLCs off the commercial harbor as planned. There was a problem with the door of one of the canisters, and a reserve diver nearly drowned, but the six operators and their three "pigs" set off. They traveled in company on the surface nearly twelve kilometers along the Ras el Tin Peninsula and thence along a breakwater to the military harbor entrance. The plan called for securing explosives beneath the target hulls and setting the fuses for 0600 (6 AM). In addition, all three SLCs were to distribute incendiary devices timed to detonate an hour after their main charges had exploded. The planners hoped these would ignite drifting oil and cause a massive conflagration that would damage more shipping in the port and spread to shore facilities. (This aspect of the plan was based on experiments made with Italian fuel oil. An attempt to ignite *Denbydale's* oil at Gibraltar had failed, however, and analysis of the higher-quality fuel used by the British would have demonstrated this scheme's futility.) After attacking, the operators were to sink their SLCs and make for shore. The submarine *Zaffiro* was to loiter off Rosetta some days hence to give the operators a chance to steal a small boat and reach it.

## THE ATTACK

There was considerable traffic in and out of Alexandria Harbor on the night of 18/19 December (see map 2). The boom was open from 2122 to 2359 to permit the exit of the tug *Roysterer* and then the entry of the damaged sloop *Flamingo*,



MAP 2



assisted by *Roysterer* and another tug. It opened again at 0024 for the 15th Cruiser Squadron, *Naiad* and *Euryalus*, and for the destroyers *Sikh*, *Legion*, *Maori*, and *Isaac Sweers*, which were returning from an unsuccessful attempt to engage an Italian convoy. The SLCs reached the boom shortly after midnight and encountered a large motorboat that was patrolling and periodically dropping small explosive charges. Lieutenant Luigi Durand de la Penne, the operator of the SLC assigned to attack *Valiant* and commander of the three crews, later described this development as “rather worrisome.”<sup>12</sup> As he was inspecting the defenses, navigational aids suddenly illuminated, and he saw three destroyers begin entering at ten knots. Although SLCs had twice penetrated Gibraltar’s barrier defense, De la Penne decided to enter on the surface through the open boom. This was dangerous—he was tossed about by the bow waves of two of the ships. The second SLC, piloted by Captain (Naval Engineers) Antonio Marceglia and assigned to attack *Queen Elizabeth*, had to avoid a destroyer, as did the third. That SLC, piloted by Captain (Naval Weapons) Vincenzo Martellotta, was assigned an aircraft carrier or, failing that, a large tanker. Martellotta passed within twenty meters of the patrol boat. Shocks from the explosive charges discomfited all three pilots, but the craft entered without being harmed or detected. Once inside the three SLCs made their separate ways to their targets.

Marceglia had to cover 2,200 meters to reach *Queen Elizabeth*. He passed between a line of cruisers and the shore, navigating by such landmarks as the French battleship *Lorraine*, and reached the net protecting his target. After exploring the perimeter, he found a gap and at 0300 donned his ARO and plunged his SLC into the darkness of the water. He would write, “The balance of the apparatus was awkward, its speed of fall increased as we descended, and I could not hold it with the rudders, perhaps because there was not enough forward thrust. I felt a sharp pain in the ear; finally we touched bottom in 13 meters raising a cloud of mud.”<sup>13</sup> From there Marceglia and his copilot worked to detach the explosive charge and suspend it from the hull. There were a few mishaps. The SLC was fed air to bring it upward to where the weapon was to be attached but rose out of control and crashed “violently” into *Queen Elizabeth*’s hull. The copilot got sick before the job was finished (the copilots, who occupied the rear seat, were submerged for much longer [see photo 2] and consequently forced to use their AROs more). Marceglia, however, finished the job of slinging the charge on a cable clamped to the battleship’s bilge keels. At 0325 he set the fuse. The two men escaped on their SLC along the harbor bottom until, concerned about the copilot’s condition, Marceglia surfaced. They scattered their small explosive charges, scuttled their craft as planned, and swam to shore, reaching land at 0430 after eight hours in the water.

De la Penne’s team had problems. As he came to within fifty meters of *Valiant* he encountered “an obstruction of type unknown to me where the floats had



## PHOTO 2



An SLC training in autumn 1941. The rear copilot was often submerged even operating on the surface.

spherical shapes of about 30 centimeters in diameter and supported a steel cable. On the cable was hanging a rope net of 4–5 mm diameter.” He finally passed his SLC over the top. “The cable and net got tangled with the clamps and propeller and made a lot of noise. Finally, the [SLC] broke free and I got back on board and headed for the funnel of the ship.”<sup>14</sup> De la Penne hurried, because there was a tear in his rubber suit; water was leaking in and body heat leaking out. It was about 0200. He submerged and bumped against *Valiant*’s hull but then lost control of the SLC, and it fell to the soft and muddy bottom at a depth of seventeen meters. After checking his position relative to the battleship, De la Penne unsuccessfully tried to get the craft’s motor started. When he ordered his copilot, Chief Petty Officer First Class Emilio Bianchi, to check whether the propeller was free, he realized he was alone. Bianchi had fainted. De la Penne next tried to drag the SLC under the battleship’s keel. It was an impossible task, and when the lieutenant started to become overwhelmed by the effects of breathing pure oxygen at too great a depth (not to mention physical exhaustion) he swam to the surface, where he found Bianchi clinging to a mooring buoy, having inadvertently surfaced. They were noticed and captured a few minutes later. Luckily for the Italians, De la Penne’s “pig” had sunk less than ten meters from *Valiant*’s hull—near enough to serve, as he had hoped, as a bottom mine.

Martellotta's SLC navigated along the shore following much the same route as Marceglia's. He slipped between *Valiant* and *Queen Elizabeth* and checked the carrier berth. Finding it empty, he saw what he believed to be a third battleship. He would write in his report, "At a certain moment I reached, near enough, the bow of a large warship that seemed like a battleship that I had not seen before, at a greater distance, because of the dark background. Noting clear distinctions between the two battleships that were the objectives of De la Penne and Marceglia, I was sure that I had before me a different ship. I considered it my duty to attack it, even if by doing so I disobeyed my operational orders."<sup>15</sup> However, Martellotta soon concluded he was looking at a cruiser, not a battleship, and that this target did not justify violating his orders. So, in a demonstration of discipline, he sought a tanker, although he would have much preferred attacking the warship. (Incidentally, the difficulty of distinguishing between a cruiser and a battleship at night from a small and virtually submerged craft should not be discounted.) In the end he settled on the large Norwegian oiler *Sagona* (7,554 GRT). Unable to submerge because of problems with his ARO, Martellotta kept his craft near the oiler's stern while the copilot fastened the charge beneath it. He set the fuse at 0255. The men then scattered explosive charges, scuttled the SLC, and swam for shore.

Egyptian police arrested Martellotta and his copilot shortly after they landed and later handed them over to the British (Italy and Egypt were not at war). Marceglia's team stayed at large for two days. Although dressed in Italian navy fatigue uniforms, they claimed to be French to anyone who asked. They took the train to Rosetta on the coast, hoping to make the rendezvous with *Zaffiro*, but Egyptian police arrested them.

The capture of De la Penne and his copilot, Bianchi, two and a half hours before their charge exploded gave the British an opportunity to mitigate the attack's worst consequences. According to De la Penne, the Italian captives waited on board *Valiant* while an Italian-speaking officer, Sublieutenant S. T. Nowson, was summoned from *Queen Elizabeth*. Nowson asked where the Italians had come from and expressed ironic sympathy for their lack of luck. They were taken ashore, accompanied by Nowson and *Valiant*'s skipper, Captain Charles Morgan, to the intelligence offices at Ras el Tin. There they were questioned separately by Major Humphrey Quill, Royal Marines, Staff Officer Intelligence (Levant). According to De la Penne, Quill kept a gun in hand and spoke excellent Italian. The captives revealed nothing, and Quill concluded that there was no evidence they had been successful. Meanwhile, at 0332, according to a Royal Navy staff history published in 1957, "a general signal was made that the presence of 'human torpedoes' in the harbor was suspected." This signal repeated previous instructions

for patrol boats to drop explosive charges “if required” and ordered tugs to raise steam. All ships were to pass lines along their bottoms to snag any suspended charges.<sup>16</sup> In his memoirs, Cunningham states that he was awoken at 0400 with news of the capture. He ordered the prisoners immediately returned to *Valiant* and confined deep within the battleship so that if there was a danger, they would reveal it to save their own skins. Midshipman Wade on board *Queen Elizabeth* was to remember that “we were all rudely awakened at 0400 by the alarm rattlers buzzing us to action stations and a bugler blowing the alarm.” He saw Cunningham, who “had hastened up from his cabin in a raincoat over his pyjamas.”<sup>17</sup>

*Valiant* passed a line along its hull, but because the charge was resting on the harbor floor, the line hit nothing. *Queen Elizabeth*’s line snagged. These measures were taken after the Italian captives were returned to *Valiant* from their second questioning. During this whole time the British never confiscated De la Penne’s “water-tight luminous wristwatch.” When ten minutes remained before the expected blast, he asked to see Captain Morgan and told him his ship would be sinking shortly but refused to give more information. Morgan sent him back down below. De la Penne later recorded that as he was returned to his prison in the ship’s bowels he heard the loudspeakers ordering the crew to abandon ship.<sup>18</sup>

The charge under *Sagona* exploded at 0547, followed by *Valiant* at 0606 and *Queen Elizabeth* at 0610. De la Penne, who was belowdecks on board *Valiant*, describes the moment: “The vessel reared, with extreme violence. All the lights went out and the hold became filled with smoke. . . . The vessel was listing to port.” He was knocked off his feet and injured his knee but climbed a ladder and found an open hatchway abandoned by its sentry. He reached the weather deck (Bianchi, in a separate compartment, survived the blast unharmed) in time to see the effect of the explosion beneath *Queen Elizabeth*, moored five hundred yards away. “[It,] too, blew up. She rose a few inches out of the water and fragments of iron and other objects flew out of her funnel, mixed with oil which even reached the deck of the *Valiant*, splashing everyone of us standing on her stern.” Admiral Cunningham later wrote, “When I was right aft in the *Queen Elizabeth* by the ensign staff, I felt a dull thud, and was tossed about five feet into the air by the whip of the ship [that is, violent flexing of the hull, most severe at bow and stern] and was lucky not to come down sprawling.” According to Wade, “there was the low, rumbling underwater explosion and the quarterdeck was thrown upwards about six inches, maybe more. . . . A blast of thick smoke and flame shot out the funnel. Then the ship seemed to settle rapidly.”<sup>19</sup>

On *Queen Elizabeth* the explosion ripped up the keel plates under B boiler room and damaged an area 190 feet by sixty feet. Boiler rooms A, B, and X and the 4.5-inch magazine rapidly flooded. Boiler room Y “and numerous other compartments slowly flooded up to the main deck level.” The ship assumed a

4.5-degree starboard list and settled eight feet by the bow. *Valiant*'s port-side protective lower hull-bulge structure had been holed, "blown into the ship over an area of 60 ft. by 30 ft." The lower bulge, inner bottom, shell room A and its magazine, and adjacent compartments had immediately flooded, causing the ship to go down five feet by the bow. *Sagona* was holed aft, and its propeller shafts and rudder were badly damaged. It was not repaired until 1946. The destroyer *Jervis*, moored alongside the oiler, suffered a twisted bow; plates in the communications mess deck and other compartments were blown in, and a fire was ignited in the paint stores. *Jervis* required a month in dry dock.<sup>20</sup>

*Valiant* occupied Alexandria's floating dry dock until April 1942, when it moved to Durban, South Africa, to continue repairs and refit. The battleship returned to service with the Eastern Fleet in August 1942. *Queen Elizabeth* emerged from dock on 27 June 1942 and sailed to Norfolk, Virginia, for permanent repairs. Its first fleet operations occurred in January 1944.

Whom to blame? On 24 October 1941 the Admiralty had warned Alexandria that "after the success obtained at Gibraltar it was considered likely that an attack by human torpedoes and/or one-man motor boats will be attempted at Alexandria."<sup>21</sup> A Type 271 radar set was allocated to Alexandria to aid in the detection of surface intruders, but seemingly more-pressing needs prevented it from being dispatched before the Italian attack. As related above, the Admiralty issued a second warning on 18 December, but this was taken as a formality.

The subsequent inquiry, headed by Cunningham's former second in command, Vice Admiral H. D. Pridham-Wippell, concluded that the fault lay in a lack of advanced technology. Protection against such attacks "must not rely on the comparatively out-of-date methods of lookouts, boats and nets. Warning of approach by modern scientific methods was essential." Pridham-Wippell also blamed several junior officers. For instance, the harbor-entrance booms had been left open "for an unnecessarily long period" due to "inefficient control exercised by the Duty Defence Officer." The commander of the solitary patrol boat at the entrance was found at fault for not "firing more charges during the period" when traffic was entering the harbor. (Pridham-Wippell did not question the actions taken after De la Penne and Bianchi were captured two and a half hours before the first explosion, and he exonerated Cunningham.)<sup>22</sup> Midshipman Wade's observations suggest that complacency was a factor: "All of us thought that the Italian navy was hopeless, inefficient, and even cowardly."<sup>23</sup> The British command also suggested that treachery played a part. For example, prisoner investigations produced a report that a French sailor on *Lorraine* had illuminated an SLC but then merely "pointed down the harbour towards the battleships." Then, the interrogation report continued, a "rowing boat with a native crew" had passed an SLC

so close the operator was hit by an oar, but the contact had never been reported. In fact, however, both incidents were misinformation the prisoners fed to their interrogators, eagerly accepted and uncritically passed along.<sup>24</sup>

The next SLC attack on Alexandria, conducted on 14/15 May 1942, was to fail, in large part because extensive use of searchlights forced the craft to operate submerged and thereby threw them far behind schedule. As it turned out, vigilance was the best defense.<sup>25</sup>

## THE AFTERMATH

The immediate British priority after the attack was to prevent the enemy from learning its results. Because *Queen Elizabeth* had settled on a level bottom, Admiral Cunningham stayed on board, and the ship's company continued such routines as the ceremony of hoisting the colors each morning. However, as Admiral Philip Vian later recalled, "Standing with [Cunningham] . . . on the cloudless morning after the disaster we saw, high above the harbour, a reconnaissance machine which had eluded the defences. The battleships had settled on the bed of the harbour, with submarines alongside supplying them with electric power: a photograph would reveal disaster."<sup>26</sup> Indeed, photographs did show a scene similar to that of Taranto Harbor after the British November 1940 air attack; the Italian naval command's initial assessment was that both battleships had been damaged. Further reconnaissance on 6 January 1942 confirmed this, and the first bulletin claiming success followed on 8 January. The Germans, however, had their doubts. Throughout December the German naval staff, unaware that *U-331* had sunk the battleship *Barham* on 25 November 1941, believed that the Mediterranean Fleet had three battleships available. The German command first acknowledged the X MAS attack on 9 January, calling it a "considerable success." However, as late as 27 January it was cautioning that "radio intelligence reports that there is no confirmation of the intelligence report according to which the *Queen Elizabeth* sank in shallow water in Alexandria. According to the reports from other sources, the battleship had repeatedly been at sea after 18 Dec. while the *Valiant* was undergoing repairs in dock."<sup>27</sup>

### *Success Must Be Exploited*

The British navy strategist Julian Corbett wrote in 1911 that "command of the sea . . . means nothing but the control of maritime communications, whether for commercial or military purposes."<sup>28</sup> At this time Italy's naval priority was to deliver supplies to the Italo-German army in North Africa. As related, by mid-November 1941 the British had come close to choking Italian communications with Africa. In December 1941 the Regia Marina took several steps to regain command of the central Mediterranean. The attack on Alexandria was one. It

was preceded by the use of battleships to escort convoys. The practicality of the latter was confirmed on 17 December in a brief sunset skirmish since known as the first battle of Sirte. British cruisers and destroyers retreated after coming under fire from Italian battleships. British forces did not counterattack that night, which convinced the Italian command that the big guns were an effective deterrent despite what sailors called the enemy's *occhio elettrico* (electric eye). An unanticipated sea-denial victory followed on the same day as the Alexandria attack, when the British cruisers and destroyers of Force K, based in Malta, ran into an Italian minefield off Tripoli; one cruiser and one destroyer were lost, and another two cruisers were damaged.

This trio of Italian victories of 17–19 December, especially the one at Alexandria, left the British without an answer to Italy's battleship-escorted convoys. As Admiral Cunningham expressed himself in a letter to the First Sea Lord, Admiral Dudley Pound, on 28 December, "The damage to the battleships at this time is a disaster." Rome had claimed sea command and reestablished communications with Africa. This new reality was demonstrated by the fact that in December 39,092 tons, or 82 percent of materiel shipped by Italy to Africa, arrived, and in January 65,570 tons, or nearly 100 percent. The victory also enabled Italy to blockade British communications from Alexandria to Malta. Prior to the Alexandria attack—from August 1940 to December 1941—all thirty-seven merchant ships that departed Egyptian ports for Malta had arrived. After Alexandria and up through the Anglo-American invasion of French North Africa nearly a year later, twenty-five merchant ships sailed from Egypt for Malta but only eight (32 percent) arrived. The Italian battleships delayed British convoys in February and March, leading to increased losses from air strikes, and in June they repulsed the large *Vigorous* convoy. The threat of battleship intervention prevented the dispatch from Egypt of any convoys at all between late March and mid-June and from June to late November 1942.<sup>29</sup>

Another logical response to the disabling of enemy capital-ship strength would be to follow up with an operation that only capital ships could counter. Truthfully, however, Italy had few practical options in this regard. Gibraltar and the Egyptian coast were out of range. The Germans, however, always ready to risk Italian assets, believed that the Regia Marina could have sent its battleships against Alexandria or the Suez Canal. "Without making allowances for oil shortages or the unwillingness of the Italian Naval Staff to take risks . . . the Italian fleet is fully capable of carrying out such operations if it makes use of the Gulf of Suda."<sup>30</sup> The Italian staff, however, could not see what possible reward would justify such a risk, and with the benefit of hindsight, they were clearly correct. A much better option would have been to invade Malta, which the Axis powers

indeed planned to do in late July 1942. Such an operation could have occurred without intervention by British surface forces, but in this instance it was the German high command that was unwilling to take the risk, and the invasion was canceled.

### *The Sincerest Form of Flattery*

X MAS continued attacking (or attempting to attack) targets—in Gibraltar, Algiers, Alexandria, Bône, Palestine, and Alexandretta (in Turkey), off the coast of Libya, and in the Black Sea. After December 1941 these efforts resulted in the sinking of one destroyer and the sinking or damaging of eighteen merchant vessels totaling nearly 100,000 GRT. In October 1942 the British mounted their first special stealth attack against the German battleship *Tirpitz*, using a direct copy of the SLC they called the Chariot. For their part, the Germans deployed a multitude of stealth weapons as the war went on, although with limited success. Meanwhile, after the armistice, both the Regia Marina and the Marina Repubblicana undertook a number of such operations; in the case of the Regia Marina, these included joint operations with their former enemies. In fact, De la Penne participated in a British-Italian attack on German-held La Spezia in June 1944 that resulted in the sinking of a hulked heavy cruiser. When De la Penne was awarded Italy's highest military decoration in May 1945, Admiral Charles Morgan, *Valiant's* ex-skipper, pinned the medal on his chest.

### *Expensive Weapons and Asymmetrical Threats*

The attack on Alexandria was a case of expensive weapon systems facing threats they were not designed to meet. This situation has been replicated often since the end of the Second World War. If the repercussions have been far less severe, in part this is because Alexandria was a blow by a major power in a large-scale, conventional conflict for the highest of stakes. A review of unconventional attacks on warships involving crash boats or swimmers since 1945 shows that most are carried out by small powers or political movements and for political as often as military reasons.

- 22 October 1948: Egyptian sloop *Farouq* attacked at Gaza by Israeli explosive boats
- 22 August 1975: Argentine destroyer *Santissima Trinidad* mined by guerrilla swimmers
- 29 October 1980: Libyan frigate *Dat Assawari* mined in Genoa by unidentified swimmers (probably French)
- 16 July 1990: Sri Lankan auxiliary *Edithara* damaged by Tamil insurgent (LTTE) explosive boats



- 16 July 1995: Sri Lankan auxiliary *Edithara* mined and sunk by LTTE swimmers
- 19 July 1996: Sri Lankan gunboat *Ranaviru* sunk by LTTE explosive boats
- 12 October 2000: Guided-missile destroyer USS *Cole* (DDG 67) damaged by Al Qaeda explosive boat.

These cases demonstrate that, in crude terms, a rubber boat with a pair of men and a rocket-propelled grenade launcher can cripple a destroyer. This is not to suggest replacing a flotilla of modern warships (even a single frigate) with a swarm of Boston Whalers. What it means is that every commander, admiral, and politician must consider unconventional threats everywhere and at any time. The real danger of politically motivated attacks is the possibility that risk management may exercise a paralyzing effect on the use of major warships.

While warships make attractive targets for religious or political groups plotting blows against prestigious symbols of Western military power, this implies a threat of a type different from that represented by the Italian X MAS commandos. The North Koreans and Iranians have war plans, and these include blows by unconventional forces and probably special weapons—serious threats, but such midgrade powers cannot aspire to sea control. A major power like Russia or China, however, with the budget and resources to deploy carriers and nuclear submarines, is another matter. One point of this study is that this most successful unconventional attack in 1941 had a very conventional foundation. It suggests that the real concern is not Al Qaeda or even North Korea but a great power that plans, as the Italians did, to neutralize a rival's main strength using unconventional weapons.

Today, the foundation of the sea control exerted by the United States and its allies is the aircraft carrier. It is a foundation that rests on relatively few hulls. There are only ten large American carriers, three of them generally out of service in "Drydock Planned Incremental Availability" status, with the old *Kitty Hawk* in reserve. NATO can contribute only the French *Charles de Gaulle* and the Italian *Cavour*. This shoestring force is far smaller than the one possessed by the Allies in World War II even after the multiple disasters of December 1941. Considering how far-flung are the theatres of crisis, between the Far East, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe, these capital ships provide a thin margin of security for such perilous times. The Western powers are clearly vulnerable: a successful unconventional blow by a first-class power with the conventional forces to take advantage of the damage wrought could make a difference in any future contest for control of the seas.

## NOTES

1. In addition to works cited in this article, the extensive literature on the Alexandria attack and Decima Flottiglia MAS in general includes Marco Spertini and Erminio Bagnasco, *I mezzi d'assalto della Xa Flottiglia MAS 1940–1945* (Parma, It.: Ermanno Albertelli, 1991); Jack Greene and Alessandro Massignani, *The Black Prince and the Sea Devils* (Cambridge, Mass.: Da Capo, 2004); and Carlo De Risio, *I mezzi d'assalto* (Rome: Ufficio Storico della Marina Militare [hereafter USMM], 2001).
2. The one-man “crash” boat was called the *motoscafo da turismo* (MT), which evolved into the *motoscafo da turismo modificato* (MTM). The *motoscafo turismo siluranti* (MTS) was a two-man boat armed with two torpedoes. There were later many variations of these two basic types—i.e., MT/MTM and MTS.
3. In June 1937 the navy physician Lt. Bruno Falcomatà accidentally discovered that the ARO could support a man underwater for more than an hour. He died in the failed attack against Malta on 27 July 1941.
4. J. Valerio Borghese, *Sea Devils* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1995), p. 83; Marc' Antonio Bragadin, *The Italian Navy in World War II* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1957), p. 274; Office of Strategic Services, “Investigation Report on Special Equipment,” n.d. [1943], p. 67, obtained from the Central Intelligence Agency by Freedom of Information Act request.
5. Enzo Berrafato and Laurent Berrafato, *La Decima Mas* (Paris: Histoire & Collections, 2001), p. 64.
6. *Motoscafo da turismo lento*, a motorboat that embarked two SLCs.
7. Michael Simpson, ed., *The Somerville Papers* (Aldershot, U.K.: Scolar, 1996), p. 307; Christopher Page, ed., *Royal Navy and the Mediterranean*, vol. 2, *November 1940–December 1941* (London: Frank Cass, 2002), p. 177.
8. Giuseppe Fioravanzo, *La Marina Italiana nella Seconda Guerra Mondiale*, vol. 1, *Dati statistici* (Rome: USMM, 1972), table L.
9. “Human Torpedo Attacks,” ADM 223/583, 1944, p. 5, The National Archives, Kew, U.K. [hereafter TNA].
10. Fondo Maricosom, busta 24, fascicolo 362, Raccolta di messaggi inglesi “QBC,” Archivio Ufficio Storico Marina Militare, Rome.
11. F. H. Hinsley et al., *British Intelligence in the Second World War* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1981), vol. 2, p. 329; Frank Wade, *A Midshipman's War* (Victoria, B.C.: Trafford, 2005), p. 119.
12. Giuseppe Fioravanzo, *La Marina Italiana nella Seconda Guerra Mondiale*, vol. 4, *Le Azioni Navali in Mediterraneo dal 1 aprile 1941 all'8 settembre 1943* (Rome: USMM, 2001), p. 114. The reports of the three SLC pilots are reprinted in this work: De la Penne, pp. 112–20; Marceglia, pp. 121–27; Martellotta, pp. 127–33.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 122.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 115–16.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 130.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 118; Page, *Royal Navy and the Mediterranean*, vol. 2, p. 225. The time 0332 cited seems too early. Moreover, the Royal Navy Staff History (republished in Page, *Royal Navy and the Mediterranean*) attributes it to Cunningham, who, according to his own account, was asleep then. The general alarm appears to have been made around 0400.
17. Wade, *Midshipman's War*, pp. 119, 122; Viscount Cunningham of Hyndhope, *A Sailor's Odyssey* (London: Hutchinson, 1951), p. 433.
18. Fioravanzo, *Azioni navali*, p. 119; quote in “Human Torpedo Attacks,” p. 5.
19. Cunningham, *Sailor's Odyssey*, p. 433; Wade, *Midshipman's War*, p. 122; quotes in Borghese, *Sea Devils*, pp. 150–51.
20. R. A. Burt, *British Battleships 1919–1945* (Barnsley, U.K.: Pen & Sword, 2012), pp. 121–22; Christopher Langtree, *The Kelly's: British J, K & N Class Destroyers of World War II* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2002), p. 129; quote in “H.M. Ships Damaged or Sunk by Enemy Action 3 Sept. 1939 to 2 Sept. 1945,” ADM 234/444, *Battleships*, pp. 16–17, TNA.
21. Page, *Royal Navy and the Mediterranean*, pp. 228–29.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 230.

23. Wade, *Midshipman's War*, p. 119.
24. "Human Torpedo Attacks," p. 3.
25. Hinsley, in *British Intelligence*, states that signals intelligence gave "precise warning" of this attack (vol. 2, p. 348), but he does not cite a source for this statement. Apparently a reference to personnel being flown from Italy to Leros was intercepted, deciphered, and then after the fact associated with the May attack. In August 1942 the British intercepted a similar message, leading to the sinking of *Scirè* off Haifa during an attempted sneak attack against that harbor. See Enrico Cernuschi, "*Ultra*": *La fine di un mito* (Milan: Mursia, 2014), pp. 160–61.
26. Philip Vian, *Action This Day* (London: Frederick Muller, 1960), p. 81.
27. German Naval Staff Operations Division, War Diary, Part A, vol. 29, January 1942, pp. 84, 265, Naval Historical Collection, Henry E. Eccles Library, Naval War College, Newport, R.I.
28. Julian S. Corbett, *Principles of Maritime Strategy* (repr. New York: Dover, 2004), p. 90.
29. Quote: Michael Simpson, *Cunningham Papers Volume I: The Mediterranean Fleet 1939–1942* (Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate for the Naval Records Society, 1995), p. 557. For convoy statistics see Fioravanzo, *Dati statistici*, table L. For Malta convoys see Arnold Hague, *The Allied Convoy System 1939–1945* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2000). For Operation VIGOROUS and the 1942 traffic situation see Vincent P. O'Hara, *In Passage Perilous: Malta and the Convoy Battles of June 1942* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 2013).
30. German Naval Staff Operations Division, War Diary, p. 248.

## REVIEW ESSAY

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### GRAND STRATEGY AND WORLD ORDER

*Karl Walling*

Brands, Hal. *What Good Is Grand Strategy? Power and Purpose in American Statecraft from Harry S. Truman to George W. Bush*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 2014. 273pp. \$26.95  
Kissinger, Henry. *World Order*. New York: Penguin, 2014. 420pp. \$21.60

From the end of the Cold War in 1989–91 and with increasing urgency in the immediate aftermath of 11 September 2001, perhaps few subjects seemed more important to those who frame and study strategy than developing a new American grand strategy for the twenty-first century. Who would play the role of George Washington in his Farewell Address advising Americans to steer clear of permanent alliances (he did not say “entangling alliances”—that was Thomas Jefferson’s phrase in his first inaugural message; Washington’s brilliant speechwriter, Alexander Hamilton, accepted that temporary alliances might be neces-

sary or advisable from time to time, but feared to be tied to any other country on a permanent basis, lest partiality and partisanship sacrifice American to foreign interests)?

Who would be the next John Quincy Adams and James Monroe, insisting that the Western Hemisphere was now off limits for future European colonization, all the while knowing the Americans did not have the blue-water navy capable of enforcing this new doctrine but that the British did and were willing to uphold it to continue their lucrative trade with Latin America? Who would be

*Karl Walling earned a BA in the liberal arts from St. John’s College in Annapolis, Md., in 1984. He was later awarded a joint PhD in social thought and political science from the University of Chicago (1992). He has been a research fellow at the Program on Constitutional Government at Harvard University and the Liberty Fund. He has been a professor of strategy at the Naval War College, first in Newport, R.I., and currently in Monterey, Calif., from 2000 to the present. His publications include Republican Empire: Alexander Hamilton on War and Free Government and (together with Bradford Lee) Strategic Logic and Political Rationality.*

the next Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan watching the simultaneous decline of the British Empire and rises of imperial Japan and imperial Germany? Who would warn Americans that they would need to take responsibility to protect their maritime trade and enforce the Monroe Doctrine by developing a navy second to none, one that might often work in concert with other states in a “naval consortium,” a proto-NATO, so to speak, of great powers? Who would be the next Harry S. Truman, Richard Nixon, or Ronald Reagan, each proclaiming his own doctrine, to aid free peoples against external invasion or internal subversion in Truman’s case, or to demand that other peoples supply the ground forces for their own defense in the case of Nixon, or to insist that what is good for the goose is also good for the gander, that the Americans might use insurgents in a proxy war in Afghanistan to bleed the Soviets just as the Soviets had used insurgents in a proxy war to bleed the Americans in Vietnam? Above all, who would be the next George Kennan advocating containment of the Soviets as a Sun Tzuian strategy to win a global conflict without fighting a third world war?

So far, no one has been able to explain a viable grand strategy for America in our time, though not for lack of trying. The two books under review supply some insight into why we have failed so far and what would be necessary to craft such a strategy, however, so they deserve careful analysis.

Hal Brands has written a “breakout” book, the sort any mere assistant professor in America today would love to have written. He begins by asking, “What good is grand strategy?” Is it possible to have grand strategy in a world of exponentially increasing flux? Might not a case-by-case approach be better, something like the maxim “Don’t do stupid stuff!” espoused by some in the Obama administration? Would it even be desirable to have such a strategy if it became a doctrine that prevented adapting to events and trends not merely beyond American control but also beyond anyone’s power to predict? And what, precisely, do we mean by grand strategy anyway? Not without reason, Brands observes, experts—perhaps practitioners especially—often laugh at the very idea of anything like grand strategy as either a “quixotic” or even a “pernicious” pursuit. “The result of all this is that discussions of grand strategy are often confused or superficial. Too frequently, they muddle or obscure what they mean to illuminate” (page vii).

Following Clausewitz, Brands sees the purpose of strategic theory as clarifying “concepts and ideas that have become confused and entangled” (page 1). After a brief history of the development of the concept of grand strategy in the works of such writers as J. F. C. Fuller, Edward Mead Earle, Basil Liddell Hart, and Colin Gray, he defines grand strategy as “the intellectual architecture that gives form and structure to foreign policy. . . . From this intellectual calculus flows policy, the various concrete initiatives—diplomacy, the use of force, others—through which states interact with foreign governments and peoples” (page 3). In other

words, it is the conceptual framework, a mental map, so to speak, that helps states determine where they want to go and how they ought to get there, all the while accepting that chance, friction, and the reactions of foreign governments and even nonstate actors, not to mention partisan politics at home, compel statesmen to tack, like sailors, trying to steer a constant course to reach their desired destination.

With this understanding of the purpose of grand strategy in mind, the bulk of Brands's book is about helping us tell the difference between good and bad grand strategy, so we can embrace the former and reject the latter the next time either is proposed. In further refining his definition, he establishes some provisional criteria for critical analysis. Grand strategy is the "conceptual logic" that ensures all the instruments of statecraft, including particular foreign policies, are orchestrated to maximize benefits to a nation's core interests—including and with highest priority in the United States, a free way of life at home. Grand strategy provides a crucial link between medium- and long-term goals. It is obsessed with the relation between means and ends, capabilities and objectives. It is as much a process as a single principle—and an interactive process especially, because to stay on course, it requires constant reassessment and adaptation to the initiatives of adversaries and unpredictable, or at least unpredicted, events. It operates no less in peacetime than in wartime, because one must go to war with the tools developed in peace and using those tools well can make war less likely or necessary. Because resources are always finite, and overstretch a constant danger, grand strategy must establish priorities, like defeating Germany first in the Second World War. With such a holistic perspective, it can liberate statesmen from doctrine, dogma, and "theateritis" (page 8), all of which might lead to sacrificing higher ends to lower means. And it is not a magic bullet. All statesmen work within constraints, sometimes from domestic politics, sometimes from bureaucracies, sometimes from allies and other foreign countries, and not least of all, from their very humanity. As human beings, their fate is bounded rationality, the limits to their ability to understand a protean universe (pages 4–16, 190–206).

These criteria did not arise like Athena from Zeus's head. They arose from experience, or rather, an interrogation of history. Although never perfect, they provide a rough-and-ready basis to evaluate grand strategy, which Brands does by holding up to these standards the administrations of Harry S. Truman, Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger, Ronald Reagan, and George W. Bush. Brands has two success stories, more or less: the Truman and Reagan administrations, the bookend presidencies of the Cold War. The Truman era is sometimes treated as a "golden age" for American grand strategy. Giants seemed to walk the earth: George Kennan, George C. Marshall, Paul Nitze, Dean Acheson, and many others who were "present at the creation" of the grand strategy of containment, a

middle ground between appeasement and war. Bit by bit and year by year, the leaders of the Truman administration created “situations of strength.” They revitalized Europe with the Marshall Plan, built NATO, brought Japan into the greater American coprosperity sphere, and generally ensured that in the age of industrial warfare, the key centers of industrial power outside the Soviet Union were aligned with the United States. Whether consciously or unconsciously, they followed Halford Mackinder in their determination to prevent any single country from dominating the Eurasian landmass. A concomitant danger was overextension, with the United States, in the words of one American official, “stretched from hell to breakfast” around the globe. That containment meant restraining the United States, not merely the Soviet Union, was a Kennanesque subtlety many did not understand. So Americans had to learn the hard way from overextension in Korea that they needed to set priorities (some theaters—Europe and Japan—were more important than others, like the Asian mainland, including China and Korea). And money was often more important than arms, especially if it enabled allies to take on the burden of defending themselves, and the strength of the American economy was always the American comparative advantage, or Clausewitzian center of gravity, in the Cold War. Perhaps most important, the Truman administration was capable of learning from its mistakes and adapting to unanticipated challenges, like the Soviet detonation of an atomic bomb in 1949 and Chinese intervention on the side of North Korea in the Korean War. Timely reassessments led to enacting much of NSC-68, calling for the largest peacetime military buildup in American history, and to settling for limited objectives in Korea, thus enabling the United States to refocus on Europe, the primary theater of the Cold War.

The opposite bookend for the Cold War is the Reagan administration from 1981 to 1989. Did this administration have a grand strategy? Some dismiss Reagan as a mere ideologue, or even caricature him as an anti-intellectual buffoon more fortunate in his timing than skillful in his statecraft. Brands demurs. After American defeat in Vietnam, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and Soviet expansion in such far-flung places as Angola, the momentum of the Cold War appeared to many, not merely Reagan, to have shifted in the Soviets’ favor. Yet Reagan especially had an acute understanding that the Soviet Union was far weaker than it had looked in the late 1970s. Reagan and his advisers sensed that the United States could take advantage of that weakness by exerting military, economic, political, and ideological pressure—not to bring about the regime’s collapse, though some hoped this might happen, but rather to provide diplomatic leverage to moderate Soviet behavior and reduce Cold War tensions. Thus, for example, the Reagan-era arms buildup was designed not merely to close the “window of vulnerability” presumed to arise from Soviet advances in missile technology but



also to increase the economic strains on the Soviet system, which spent at least 20 percent of its GDP (and probably much, much more) on the military in the early 1980s. Henry Rowen at the CIA, and Caspar Weinberger and Andrew Marshall at the Pentagon, developed what Marshall called a “cost-imposing strategy” that would confront the Soviets with a painful dilemma: concede defeat in the arms race or overstretch their economy in an effort to keep pace (page 112).

For Reagan, the Strategic Defense Initiative, a.k.a. “Star Wars,” was an end in itself. He deplored the doctrine of mutual assured destruction, was determined to find an alternative to it, and would never bargain it away, even when Soviet leader Gorbachev offered generous concessions. Nonetheless, those concessions arose, in part, from Gorbachev’s own awareness that the arms race was moving in a new direction in which the Soviets could not compete at a price they could afford. And Gorbachev was not the only one to change. From the ABLE ARCHER crisis of 1983, in which the Soviets misinterpreted a NATO exercise as the beginning of a surprise nuclear attack on the Soviet Union, Reagan learned to recalibrate American policy. He understood that the successful negotiations he sought would be possible only if he toned down his rhetoric (pages 124–25). This reassessment led to five summits between Reagan and Gorbachev between 1985 and 1988. Although the administration’s accomplishments were sullied by the Iran-Contra scandal, the results of Reagan speaking more softly while carrying an ever bigger stick were stunning. By the time he left office, the world was a much safer place, with the Soviets agreeing to eliminate all intermediate-range nuclear forces in Europe, accepting deep cuts in their strategic arsenals, withdrawing from Afghanistan and other third-world conflicts, unilaterally reducing their conventional forces, and signaling a commitment to self-determination in Eastern Europe and liberalization at home.

Brands also looks at two cases that deserve to be counted as failures. For Brands, President Nixon and his brilliant national security adviser (later Secretary of State), Henry Kissinger, failed because they were too heroic; President George W. Bush and his national security team because their strategy was too grand. It is difficult to imagine a more unlikely team than Nixon and Kissinger. The former began his political career as the sort of red-baiting demagogue Kissinger could only detest. As a European émigré and Harvard intellectual, Kissinger represented everything in the so-called East Coast establishment that Nixon despised. Yet they had one important thing in common. They believed that extraordinary individuals could change the course of history, so Nixon was fascinated by the drama of the “big play” (like the opening to China) that could cut through the daily morass of politics. Kissinger, the archpolitical realist, had an almost romantic vision of the lonely statesman imposing his vision on his time (pages 59–60). To be fair, few American leaders have faced such extraordinary

challenges. Management of the end of the Vietnam War, negotiation from weakness with the Soviet Union, and the implosion of American society in the late 1960s limited their flexibility. They were dealt a weak hand, and, one might conclude, played their few cards as best they could.

Their chief goal was to decrease American burdens and increase American flexibility, while at the same time maintaining global order and keeping radical forces in check (page 60). The key was triangular diplomacy, especially the opening to China, as a way to balance against the Soviets, and *détente*, as a means to create a structure of legitimacy, an agreed set of rules for superpower competition, with the Soviets especially. This experiment was partially successful, but it came at a terrible price. Heroic statesmanship, as practiced by Nixon and Kissinger, led to a conspiratorial ethos that required working outside the constraints of the American political system, and sometimes in opposition to those constraints, to international law, and to the traditional American commitment to democratic governments, in Chile, for example (pages 76–79). This effort to circumvent the system was bound to produce a backlash on both the right and the left, with Democrats tying their hands and undermining their credibility against North Vietnam and the Soviets, and many Republicans, like Reagan, denouncing *détente* as appeasement. By the end of the Ford administration in 1976, it is fair to say the structure of peace Nixon and Kissinger had sought to establish on the model of the Congress of Vienna in 1815 was close to collapse. Not only had their efforts produced enormous domestic opposition but also the Soviets themselves did not buy into the theory of “self-containment” that *détente* had been designed to produce (pages 69, 82). They refused to “link” ongoing competition in the third world to trade concessions and arms control. Partisan politics at home and the Soviets’ refusal to play by the proposed new rules of the game made the heroic approach look increasingly quixotic.

Brands bends over backward to be fair to the George W. Bush administration, but his final judgment of that administration’s grand strategy is damning. Quite rightly Brands observes greater continuity than is commonly acknowledged between the Bush administration and that of President Clinton. In the aftermath of the Cold War, American grand strategy, if there was one at all, was “enlargement” of the world’s free community of market democracies. Under the Clintonites, that meant hegemony on the cheap. Americans would globalize free institutions and economic interdependence, but would not commit substantial military forces anywhere, thus leading to a variety of ineffective half-measures, in Somalia and Kosovo, for example, which made hawks on the right see the Clintonites as amateurs (pages 145–49). Nonetheless, like Clinton before him, it appeared President Bush would be a domestic-policy president primarily. The “Vulcans” surrounding him did not gain substantial influence until 9/11. Within months of that

atrocities, however, the president was proclaiming his intention to preserve lasting American military hegemony, to strike preemptively—and unilaterally—against gathering threats, and to treat “rogue states” seeking weapons of mass destruction (WMD) as no less a danger than terrorism (page 151). Promoting democracy in places where it had few cultural roots, if any at all, was not the primary objective of the Bush administration’s grand strategy. That is better understood as making an example out of noxious regimes that might support terrorists, but democracy promotion was a serious secondary objective and one that loomed larger as a pretext for war after the failure to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. In the course of eighteen months President Bush embarked on a path that was breathtaking in its neo-Wilsonian scope and ambition. He would democratize not only Afghanistan (hard enough), but also Iraq, a country that had nothing to do with 9/11 and whose ethno-sectarian cleavages made democratic consensus unlikely and democratic pluralism downright dangerous. Indeed, the Iraq war was intended to launch a campaign to democratize the entire Middle East on the erroneous assumption that revolutionary change would make Middle Eastern states more stable, less violent at home, and less likely to support terrorists or become havens for them. Worse still, the declared objective of perpetual hegemony risked producing the very international resistance—including among allies, not merely adversaries—it was meant to avoid.

Many blame the postinvasion anarchy in Iraq and resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan on failures of strategic planning among Bush’s advisers (for “phase four” peace and stability operations especially). Under Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, the United States was notoriously unwilling to commit forces large and long enough to have a chance of achieving its ambitious objectives in nation building. Brands concedes these problems, but concludes that the fundamental problem was poor assessment of the capabilities and limitations of American power. Hyperpower offensives were justified with worst-case scenarios (rogue states passing WMD to terrorists), but the strategies to pursue them were based on best-case scenarios about the ease of establishing any kind of order, much less a democratic one, in the wake of merely military victory. If so, grand strategy in the Bush administration was conceptually flawed from the beginning, because it overestimated what American power could achieve and underestimated the costs, risks, uncertainties, and unintended consequences inherent in trying to transform a large portion of the world in the American image (pages 164, 176–80).

What ultimately is the object of grand strategy? This question invites reflection on the latest book by the most famous American grand strategist alive today, *World Order* by Henry Kissinger. This is not Kissinger’s best work, but at age ninety-one, it may well be his last. Indeed, it is fair to say that Kissinger has been

rewriting the same book, focused on the same problem of establishing a balance of power and a structure of legitimacy, for decades, ever since the German émigré, appalled by the devastation of the Second World War, wrote his doctoral dissertation at Harvard. When revised as his first book in 1954, *A World Restored: Metternich, Castlereagh, and the Problem of Peace, 1812–22*, the dissertation established his place as one of the foremost students of peace and peacemaking in the twentieth century. Arguably his best book is *Diplomacy*, which surveys efforts to blend legitimacy and balance from the Treaty of Westphalia to the present. With one important exception, readers will find little Kissinger has not already said (and often better elsewhere) in *World Order*, but the exception is so huge that some might even think Kissinger has defined what American grand strategy ought to seek to accomplish in the twenty-first century.

Missing from *World Order* is a silent, now deceased interlocutor. As the book comes to an end, Kissinger appears to be in a conversation with Samuel Huntington about the possible clash of civilizations and what, if anything, can be done about it. In particular, he is worried about the rise of China. Says Kissinger, “To strike a balance between the two concepts of order—power and legitimacy—is the essence of statesmanship” (page 367). International crises that can lead to major wars tend to occur as this balance unravels. China is a potential problem not merely because of its growth in power but also because it does not share all or even most Western conceptions of legitimacy. The Westphalian system, based on the principle of sovereignty, that Kissinger admires was designed by and for European states. It is partially enshrined in the United Nations Charter. If there is anything like a universal code of legitimacy in international affairs, it is in that charter, but it is largely a creation of the West in 1945 at a time when Wilsonianism was resurgent in the United States and the United States was powerful enough to be a global hegemon setting the terms of future world order. Understandably, those who did not partake in framing that order, or were marginalized as it was framed, do not necessarily have the same stake in its preservation, or any stake at all. They may be more inclined to pursue its transformation, which is inevitable, with the great question being how to do so peacefully.

Not surprisingly, when many wonder whether interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere produced strategic overextension for the United States, Kissinger aims to strike a balance between American leadership and restraint, a process he sees as “inherently unending. What it does not permit is withdrawal” (page 370). As he sees that matter, “a reconstruction of the international system is the ultimate challenge to statesmanship in our time” (page 371). The penalty for failure will not necessarily be a major war between states; perhaps more likely is an evolution of spheres of influence identified with particular domestic structures and forms of governance (for example, the Westphalian model of the

West versus an Islamist model in the Middle East, North Africa, Pakistan, and elsewhere). A struggle between regions, a.k.a. Huntington's clash of civilizations, could be even more debilitating, and protracted, than the struggle among nations has been. While never careless about the balance of power, Kissinger is close to Huntington in claiming that the "quest for world order will require a coherent strategy to establish a concept of order *within* the various regions, and to relate the regional orders to one another" (page 371).

To paraphrase Basil Liddell Hart, the object of war is a better state of peace, if only from our own point of view. In like manner, Kissinger is suggesting that the object of grand strategy is a more favorable world order, at least from our own point of view. "The United States needs a strategy and a diplomacy" to serve that end. Without setting prescriptions, Kissinger does list the questions a coherent grand strategy would have to address. What do we seek to prevent, no matter what happens, and if necessary alone? What do we seek to achieve, even if not supported by *any* multilateral effort? What do we seek to achieve, or prevent, *only* if supported by an alliance? What should we *not* engage in, even if urged by a multilateral group or alliance? Above all, what is the nature of the values we seek to advance? What applications depend in part on circumstances (page 372)?

The same questions apply in principle to other societies, but American universalism and sense of mission may cause unnecessary conflict with regions and states that do not share similar premises. Kissinger's preferred solution is a kind of international pluralism, which is not to be confused with multiculturalism. As a quest for truth, especially about the highest and most important things, Western philosophy requires considering whether there is one best way of life, but the quest for peace allows, even demands, that there can be many civilizations—Western, Sinitic, Orthodox, Muslim, etc., each with its own sense of legitimacy. "To achieve a genuine world order, its components, while maintaining their own values, need to acquire a second culture that is global, structural, and juridical—a concept of order that transcends the perspective and ideals of any one region or state" (page 373). Few students of Kissinger's work will be surprised that, at this moment in history, Kissinger sees this second culture, or weak universal civilization, as a "modernization of the Westphalian system informed by contemporary realities" (page 373).

Attractive as this might seem to citizens of the West especially, one must not underestimate the difficulty of the task. As Brands reveals, Kissinger and Nixon failed in their efforts to get the Soviets to buy into the structure of legitimacy they sought with *détente*. If they failed when dealing with just one major power, one must wonder about the possibility of doing so with a multiplicity of civilizations. And of course, what people consider legitimate does change over time. The Concert of Europe established at the Congress of Vienna in 1815 seemed to many

in 1848 and on other occasions to lock in an illegitimate order for the benefit of the ruling elites, and its seeming illegitimacy contributed to the origins of the First World War. Moreover, Kissinger's call for order within, not merely among, civilizations seems to imply a need for regional hegemony, though Nixon and Kissinger's vision of "regional sheriffs" failed dismally for the United States when the Iranian Revolution led to the overthrow of the shah of Iran. Indeed, at times Kissinger seems nostalgic for a world of "classical diplomacy," when states seemed to be all that mattered and diplomacy appeared to be made only by cabinet ministers, that has long since passed away; in more than a few ways, that world is often more the creation of contemporary academics seeking order than of the increasingly disordered period following the Congress of Vienna. On the other hand, the perfect must not be the enemy of the good, or even the merely satisfactory. If Kissinger's understanding of statesmanship sometimes seems unduly romantic, he deserves credit for pointing out the best possible objective, to be pursued bit by bit as time and opportunity allow, for American grand strategy in our century: a world in which we are safe to live according to our own principles based on the shared international culture of sovereignty, which would allow others to live according to their own principles, free from outside intervention, however distasteful their way of life might seem to us, so long as they do not threaten us and allies essential to our security. This *leben und leben lassen* approach would guard against the sort of liberal-democratic jihad feared by Brands while allowing for the continuing engagement with the world Kissinger quite rightly sees as necessary to geopolitical balance.

In sum, neither of these books lays out a complete grand strategy for our time, but each pushes the conversation in a useful direction. Kissinger's potential "last hurrah" represents his attempt to square the circle of Huntington's clash of civilizations and compels us to ask what grand strategy is for. Brands's fine work establishes him as a major-league strategic thinker whose book deserves multiple readings. It would grace the curriculum of any program in grand strategy.

## BOOK REVIEWS

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### A BIT OF A MAVERICK

Pillsbury, Michael. *The Hundred-Year Marathon: China's Secret Strategy to Replace America as the Global Superpower*. New York: Henry Holt, 2015. 319pp. \$30

*The Hundred-Year Marathon* is the culmination of a lifetime's work on Chinese security policy by Dr. Michael Pillsbury (1945–), an independent China analyst based in Washington, D.C. The book is popular, not academic. That said, it is by and large accurate and must be read and digested.

At the outset, though, two issues must be raised. One is the title. The other is the author. The title suggests, with no evidence, that somehow a secret Masonic cabal has existed in China for a century, having as its purpose the overthrow of the United States as leading world power. Taken literally that would mean planning got under way in 1915, under President Yuan Shikai, continued during Chiang Kai-shek's watch, and then on through Mao Zedong and beyond—which, bluntly put, is not history at all, but classic tinfoil-hat conspiracy theory. China's changing international behavior over the last century is indeed difficult to explain, but it is most certainly not the product of some arcane "Protocols for the Replacement of America."

As for Pillsbury, he is well-trained, hard-working, and independently wealthy.

He is the author of original and definitive books about the People's Liberation Army. He is also a bit of a maverick: a one-man show, rarely part of a team. Long a proponent of pro-China policies, including sale of weapons to Beijing in the 1980s and 1990s, he has, as he tells it, changed his mind as he has learned more. While a "panda hugger" he was well treated and given much "access"—which means access to people whose job is to deceive you, as well as hospitality. In 2006, however, he published an article in the *Wall Street Journal* decisively repudiating his previous views—and felt the back of Beijing's hand until 2013. Then he was able to return to China, as Beijing sought to shore up support, faced with the South China Sea crisis, to be discussed below (pages 129–30).

Pillsbury is not to be believed without question. He has had numerous run-ins with counterintelligence officials owing to his seemingly uncontrollable proclivity to leak secrets—to this reviewer, for example, in the passenger seat of his vintage Jaguar motorcar.

Here, however, we are reviewing neither the sales strategy nor the author of this book, but rather its argument.



The book makes two fundamental contentions. First, Pillsbury states that the Asian region and the United States currently face the problem of an unexpectedly aggressive China. Second, he argues that this unpleasant surprise is no more than the product of decades of official self-delusion about Beijing, even when confronted with mountains of facts that supported opposite conclusions. This reviewer agrees with these two points, albeit with many academic caveats that will be spared. Disagreement arises only when speculation begins about the future.

For roughly forty years, from the Nixon diplomacy of the 1970s to about 2010, the idea that China could pose a threat militarily was considered so mistaken as to be effectively beyond toleration in either academic or governmental circles. The insistent conviction was that “engagement” would transform China into a strong economy, a friend, even an ally, and most likely a democracy as well (page 7). Among the few in Washington not convinced by these arguments was the longtime head of the Pentagon’s Office of Net Assessment, Andrew Marshall, who did much to support Pillsbury’s work through contract research.

China is of course a new country. The first states having that word as part of their official names were founded in the last century: the Republic of China in 1911; then after the Chinese civil war, the People’s Republic of China in 1949. Before that a myriad of states, some ethnically Chinese, some not, rose and fell on the East Asian plain. To lump them all together as a political “China” to be treated as a historical entity having thousands of years of history is a profound error, as specialists now recognize. Still, the continuity of a

distinct culture belonging to the Chinese people must not be underestimated.

If one were to undertake a comprehensive study of the view of force within this cultural tradition, the first consideration would be the extreme pacifism expressed in the classics of Confucianism, created two millennia in the past, and long official orthodoxy. The mainstream of Chinese thought—not a pretense but a conviction—sees superior virtue and civilization as the way to genuine power, as is testified by the vast corpus of classical writings, memorized by scholars for generations and not forgotten today, as well as the volumes of official memorandums on foreign policy, in which opposition to force is regularly the winning argument.

Pillsbury, however, makes no claim to be writing about “China” in general or even broadly about today’s People’s Republic. He says little about Confucianism because others have said much, and focuses instead on the all-but-forbidden tradition of writers on military topics, the *bingjia* whose heyday was also two millennia ago, but whose influence has continued, like an underground stream, ever since, to emerge today in what Pillsbury calls “the Chinese hawks,” or *yingpai*.

Seemingly overlooked by official American estimates, these hawks have no truck with engagement, are deeply antiforeign and anti-American, and seek Chinese hegemony to be achieved through deception, strategic dominance, and the use of particularly effective weapons usually called in English, rather awkwardly, “assassins’ maces” (*shashoujian*). They do not lack influence.

Pillsbury has come to know and understand this group by employing the most elementary but often neglected methods of information gathering:

namely, reading their work and having long conversations with them (he speaks excellent Chinese). The results of years of such research, by Pillsbury and others, effectively upend the conventional wisdom of nearly half a century. The questions that follow are: First, how did we go wrong? And second, what to do now?

To answer the first question, “what went wrong,” requires going back to President Richard Nixon and his national security adviser, Henry Kissinger. That China would reenter the international system was long a near certainty in their time. Maoism was beginning to be recognized internally as having been an unmitigated catastrophe, not only for the Chinese people, but also for the military—though many foreigners still idolized the man. The Soviet Union moreover presented China with a threat requiring a counterweight. The only question was how exactly China would return. Sadly, these two Americans devised an utterly unrealistic plan that set our diplomacy on a course that, unsurprisingly, has brought unexpected and baleful consequences.

Nixon and Kissinger seem to have imagined a future in which an intimate Beijing–Washington political axis would supersede the entire then-existing security system in Asia. Such a vision seems the only possible explanation for Nixon’s quite astonishing question to Mao when they met on 21 February 1972: “Is it better for Japan to be neutral, totally defenseless, or it is [*sic*] better for a time for Japan to have some relations with the United States? The point being—I am talking now in the realm of philosophy—in international relations there are no good choices.”

Put bluntly, Nixon seems already to have decided, long before the meeting, to drop relations with Japan, then our

closest ally, in favor of China. (Japan was of course kept in the dark.) But Mao was bored and somnolent as the two leaders spoke. Neither he nor any other Chinese ever took up this offer.

How could so unrealistic an American policy plan have come into being? The answer is by wishful thinking and self-deception: in this case, aided by the rigorously selective limitation of sources to those that supported the policy already adopted. Only a tiny secret team knew of the plan. The books they read were uniformly from the strongly pro-Mao school of writing then current (Kissinger, *White House Years* [Boston: Little, Brown, 1979], p. 1051). Other books, many by better scholars, existed but were not consulted. Likewise, the speaker invited to the White House to enlighten the Americans was the erratic Frenchman André Malraux. Others were incomparably more knowledgeable and available—to name but two, the American Foreign Service officer Edward E. Rice and the Berlin professor Jürgen Domes—but they were not even contacted. Thus, information that had been intentionally biased formed the deepest foundation for our policy. But the longed-for axis between Beijing and Washington never came into being. Quite the opposite happened.

Starting in the first decade of this century, with now-retired leaders holding the reins, China openly changed its visible foreign policy to dangerous military adventurism, for reasons no one can explain. The change has not succeeded. Thus the conquest of Scarborough Shoal undertaken in spring 2012, which Beijing no doubt expected to be a military cakewalk against the Filipinos, has turned into a military and diplomatic standoff, drawing in

more players, losing China prestige, and showing no sign of ending (page 203).

It is as yet unclear that continuing irresponsible expansion will be the gravamen of President Xi Jinping's foreign policy. China's current leader took power in November 2012 months after the Scarborough Shoal standoff began and while he has not repudiated the policy he seems far more intent on domestic reform.

China could even liberalize: recently the down-market and often xenophobic Beijing tabloid *Global Times* attacked Western "pro-China" scholars for insulting that country by explaining away repression as the only answer to otherwise inevitable chaos. "Western scholars have never imagined that China might have a 'peaceful democratic transition,'" the tabloid observed (8 March 2015). These astonishing words did not appear by accident: the *Global Times* is wholly owned by the party's most authoritative mouthpiece, the *People's Daily*. Xi must be aware that even small external distractions will almost certainly derail domestic reform.

As for what the rest of the world should do, obviously it is time to prepare: to rearm and deter seriously. The region, however, is responding so robustly to Chinese aggression that Beijing is alarmed. Japan today is not a mighty power only because it chose to try peace instead. Let no one doubt that if Tokyo deems it necessary, it will emerge again—indeed that is its current direction—which would be perhaps the greatest imaginable setback possible for the Chinese political and economic future. Nearly every other state in Asia too, from India to the Philippines and beyond, is rapidly and effectively preparing military capabilities that

could present China with a nightmare scenario in which it is at war with a multiplicity of capable adversaries along a front of more than four thousand miles, from India to Tokyo.

Pillsbury speaks of the risk of prematurely "asking the weight of the emperor's cauldrons," or *wending* (page 196), which sounds exotic. What it means is showing your cards too soon. China has in fact done just this, with the consequences the Chinese sages would have predicted: creating failure as others react in time. My conclusion: we will certainly soon see a highly militarized Asia; we may see some skirmishes or worse (though recall that the Chinese esteem most those victories achieved without fighting; they abhor long-term, attritional war), but we most emphatically will not see Chinese hegemony, either in the region or in the world.

ARTHUR WALDRON



Morris, David J. *The Evil Hours: A Biography of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2015. 338pp. \$27

The numbers are staggering. In 2012 the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) estimated that eight thousand veterans take their own lives every year. Think about that—twenty-two people die every day of whom many, in pain and having lost hope, have carried their war with them for far too long. For some it may have been recent fighting in Afghanistan or Iraq; for others it may have been decades ago in the jungles of Southeast Asia. Regardless, the trauma these people experienced knows no boundaries between deserts and mountains, between marshes and

oceans. Or as the great First World War poet Wilfred Owen said: “These are men whose minds the Dead have ravished.”

David J. Morris, former Marine infantry officer turned war correspondent, tells us that post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, as it is commonly known, has been called many things throughout history: shell shock, combat exhaustion, the blues, or simply being worn down and played out. It’s a condition that “went unacknowledged for millennia . . . and is now the fourth most common psychiatric disorder in the United States.” Not until 1980, when PTSD was added to the psychiatric manual—the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, or DSM—did PTSD get more attention.

Morris’s book is not only timely—arriving at the end of two long wars—but it is grand in its ambition and scope. Similarly to Siddhartha Mukherjee’s approach in his Pulitzer Prize-winning book, *The Emperor of All Maladies: A Biography of Cancer*, Morris covers the history of trauma and war; how trauma affects the mind; the therapies that are often used to fight it; the drugs that are prescribed to numb it; and some alternatives to modern medicine. But what makes it truly a powerful book, beyond a journalist’s endeavor, is that PTSD is personal to Morris. His book is an exploration that begins with basic yet difficult questions: “Why does the world seem so different after I got back from Iraq? Why do I feel so out of place now? What does one do with the knowledge gained from a near death experience?”

In October 2007, in the middle of the surge, Morris was imbedded with the Army’s 1st Infantry Division. While riding in a Humvee in the volatile neighborhood of Saydia in southwestern Baghdad, his patrol was attacked. The

Humvee in which Morris was riding was hit by an improvised explosive device. Battered and bent, the vehicle held together and the patrol was able to get back to its forward operating base. Morris escaped serious physical injury, and after a short medical examination he left Iraq and was back in California a week later. The explosion would change his life. It would lead him on a long journey, trying to understand his experience, through literature, research, and writing. It left him with nightmares and anger. It left him sitting in VA centers watching others suffer silently, with shaking legs and blank stares.

Morris tells us, in beautiful, searing language, that “we are born in debt, owing the world a death. This is the shadow that darkens every cradle. Trauma is what happens when you catch a surprise glimpse of that darkness, the coming annihilation not only of the body and the mind but also, seemingly, of the world.” And yet the world is still trying to understand how trauma affects us. Not surprisingly, the science is mixed. Some therapies have empirical evidence showing that they help trauma victims—whether it is combat trauma or one of the other big-*T* traumas that Morris describes. The big-*T* traumas are those that are soul crushing—airplane crashes, extended combat, rape, physical assault, and natural disasters. These are the traumas that overwhelm our brains and destroy our sense of time.

The VA’s response to trauma patients, the “gold standard” therapies, focuses on two types: prolonged exposure and cognitive processing therapies. Most have heard of prolonged exposure. It is essentially a reliving of the event, over and over, in which the patient, with help from a therapist, is trying to change

the stimulus to the traumatic event. Yet there is no consensus on what the best treatment for PTSD may be. For as Morris notes, the “gold standard” treatments often do not account for those that leave the program prior to completion.

Drugs are just as questionable. Some drugs, like selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors—Prozac and Zoloft—have been around for years, and are the more popular drugs prescribed for PTSD. And like many of the therapies, some patients find that the drugs help them. Then there are drugs like propranolol, originally developed to prevent heart attacks, which now challenge our ethics on how we deal with trauma victims. That is because propranolol, when provided correctly, can inhibit the brain’s ability to etch a traumatic event in your mind if taken within a few hours of the traumatic event. This is a drug that can disrupt the brain’s ability to embrace a memory; it can change our sense of self. Morris rightly raises the concern that messing with our “flight or fight response” can fundamentally alter what we view as dangerous or not.

In the end, we are reminded that as humans we are idiosyncratic creatures—each of us responds to traumatic events in our own way. Therapies that work for some do not necessarily work for others. Just the simple act of listening to our bodies—say, practicing yoga—is a powerful therapy for some PTSD patients. As for Morris himself, he does not discount anything that might work for you, even if that is a moderate amount of alcohol; if it works, then consider it a remedy, or just another way to make it through the day.

*The Evil Hours* is not simply a book for combat veterans and service members. It is a book that deserves a much wider

audience. Trauma and the suffering and pain that follow have been with us since Homer’s time and will be with us for many more years to come. David J. Morris has shed much needed light on this all-too-human and -deadly thing.

CHRISTOPHER NELSON



Jones, Charles A. *More than Just War: Narratives of the Just War Tradition and Military Life*. London: Routledge, 2013. 224pp. \$120 (Kindle \$33)

Pedestrian forms of philosophical innovation often involve the application of old ideas to new cases. It should therefore come as no surprise that the creative bulk of what is published today on the ethics of war achieves its novelty—when it does at all—by applying the just war tradition to hitherto-unexamined aspects of contemporary warfare, for example, drones and unmanned systems, cyber warfare, intelligence and covert operations, asymmetric warfare, and terrorism.

Now, this is a useful thing to do; it has expanded conceptual categories within the literature on the ethics of war (e.g., the *jus post bellum* and *jus in intelligencia*). But it falls short of that deeper kind of philosophy that overthrows preconceptions and generates entirely new areas of rational inquiry. This more difficult (but potentially more fruitful) way to innovate in philosophy would call into question the entire edifice of knowledge that, through university schooling or professional military education, everyone takes for granted when discussing the ethics of war.

Charles A. Jones does exactly this in his provocative, original, fun-to-read, and tightly argued book *More than Just War*:

*Narratives of the Just War Tradition and Military Life*. Jones is Emeritus Reader in International Relations at the University of Cambridge, and such a conceptual tour de force is exactly what one might expect from a Cambridge don by comparison to many military authors who understandably confine their work to areas of their own tactical expertise. By contrast, Jones offers perhaps one of the most interesting and penetrating theses about the ethics of war since Michael Walzer's classic *Just and Unjust Wars*.

Jones shows that the pithy stories that appear in almost every book or article about the just war tradition, tales that narrate the tradition's cumulative development from venerable origins to postwar resurgence, mask important complexities crucial to understanding its applicability to contemporary warfare. Since the 1960s, the resilience and ubiquity of just war discourse, combined with continual reference to late-classical and medieval theologians in contemporary texts, give the impression that a continued and coherent "tradition" of thought about war existed and continues to develop. Yet, Jones argues, careful examination reveals that just war thinking was largely ignored from the middle of the seventeenth century only to be revived in the middle of the twentieth. What is now spoken of as if it were an unbroken tradition owes its veneer of coherence to resuscitation by modern scholarship. Upon close examination, both selectivity and instrumentality characterize its revival.

Alongside this historical critique, Jones exposes contemporary just war doctrine for its implicit adherence to a set of assumptions that he argues are objectionable when applied to contemporary warfare. For example, the doctrines of *jus in*

*bello* and *jus ad bellum* assume the vantage point of the state over the individual and have a difficult time dealing with unorthodox forms of modern warfare. Just war doctrine assumes a conception of ethics that is rule oriented and largely ignores character—something actual militaries spend a lot of time cultivating. Finally, the doctrine's origin is more wedded to religious theology than most secular philosophers (like Michael Walzer) and champions of international law (like Yoram Dinstein) today admit.

Jones brings to light an intriguing dichotomy between the way practitioners and authors closest to war account for its normative dimensions, on the one hand, and the narrowness of just war discourse on the other. An intriguing question gets raised: How did this dichotomy between theory and practice come about? *More than Just War* answers by offering a different account of how the just war doctrine became what it is today, an artificial "tradition" unable to account for the most interesting normative aspect of modern warfare—the phenomenology experienced by war's participants themselves. An alternative tradition of military ethics, Jones says, exists alongside the just war doctrine. This tradition, found in both film and literature, fills the experiential gaps that the just war doctrine leaves barren. Any account of military ethics that ignores both traditions will suffer from this neglect.

Perhaps the most intriguing part of Jones's book offers a penetrating survey of a variety of authors within this latter tradition. Works by William Shakespeare, Sir Walter Scott, James Fenimore Cooper, Stephen Crane, John Buchan, Robert Louis Stevenson, Joseph Conrad, Tim O'Brien, and Kurt Vonnegut are featured. Since many of



these will be familiar to students, *More than Just War* makes for an excellent supplement to the curriculum at military service academies, war colleges, and civilian institutions.

While the book's strength rests in its ability to unmask the just war tradition critically and outline its alternative, there are several points where the author could have done more to substantiate the philosophical views that undergird the argument's positive side. For example, Jones leans quite heavily on the American pragmatism of John Dewey without fleshing out the exact connections between Dewey's epistemology and his own. Nevertheless, since most readers will be nonphilosophers such omissions are the slightest of concerns.

At over one hundred dollars (hard-bound), the book's expense may be prohibitive for many. Routledge is expected to offer a less expensive paperback sometime in 2015. Meanwhile, an affordable digital (Kindle) version is available.

JOSEPH M. HATFIELD



Biggar, Nigel. *In Defence of War*. Oxford, U.K.: Oxford Univ. Press, 2013. 384pp. \$55 (paperback \$30)

Nigel Biggar is Regis Professor of Moral and Pastoral Theology and Director of the McDonald Centre for Theology, Ethics, and Public Life at the University of Oxford. This volume collects seven essays on various aspects of the just war tradition. It is very much a book of theological ethics, although in strong dialogue with contemporary philosophical just war thinking and the international legal framework of the law

of armed conflict. Although the essays are to some degree independent of each other, they are united by Biggar's clear and consistent theological perspective.

Anyone familiar with the culture of "mainline" Protestantism and much liberal Roman Catholicism will recognize that these traditions, at least since the Vietnam War, have moved strongly toward positions that are to various degrees close to pacifism. Some are straightforwardly pacifist—a position most closely identified with the American theologian Stanley Hauerwas. Some Roman Catholic organizations such as Pax Christi are on this end of the spectrum as well. Others hold a position generally called "just war pacifism" in that they continue to use the categories of just war, but apply them in such a way that almost no actual conflict could meet them (by, for example, interpreting "last resort" as requiring one to do literally everything conceivable short of war). A position called "just peacemaking" has emerged in many denominations as preferable to just war, stressing anticipatory actions to be taken to prevent war over the necessity of the use of force in some circumstances. Biggar's first two chapters address these trends directly, arguing against the coherence of the pacifist view and in favor of a meaningful sense in which Christian love can be manifest, even in the midst of military conflict.

The next two chapters take up two central principles of classic Christian just war thinking: double effect (in which a given action is militarily desirable but also has a foreseen, but not intended, "evil" effect such as destruction of civilian lives and property) and proportionality. The principle of double effect has been under considerable criticism from philosophers, who prefer to reduce it to



utilitarian calculus, and from Christian thinkers who worry that it smacks of hairsplitting casuistry. Biggar strongly defends it, noting that a hallmark of distinctively Christian ethics is its attention to the intentional state of the actor—an emphasis that reaches all the way back to the Sermon on the Mount. Christian ethics has always maintained what the Germans call a *Gesinnungsethik*—an ethic of intention. Therefore the “foreseen but not intended” requirement of double effect captures that in an essential way.

The proportionality requirement of just war appears on both the *jus ad bellum* and the *jus in bello* sides of the just war ledger. Biggar’s fourth chapter considers it on the *jus ad bellum* side and takes up the most challenging of cases to test it: World War I. In the face of widespread belief that World War I was a blunder and certainly not worth its vast toll, Biggar argues that it indeed was worth it. While this reviewer didn’t find the argument completely persuasive, it is closely and carefully argued and provides an excellent presentation of an uncommonly held and therefore provocative view.

Chapters 5 and 6 deal with questions of the relationship of international law to the parallel ethical tradition of just war. Against black-letter-law fundamentalism, Biggar strives in these chapters to establish the principle that the ethical tradition is deeper and may on occasion trump the legal. Some contemporary philosophers (most notably David Rodin and Jeff McMahan) critique aspects of just war tradition from the perspective of a modern liberal rights-based perspective. In particular, they attack the traditional division of responsibility in war between the political leaders who make the decision to go to war in the first place (*jus ad bellum*) and the soldiers who do the actual fighting (who

bear no responsibility for the overall justice of the war, but only for the conduct within the war [*jus in bello*]). They challenge the “moral equality of soldiers,” which holds that soldiers on both sides are not culpable for the killing they do as long as they fight within the bounds of the law of armed conflict. In their account, at least one side in any war must be wrong in fighting it, and therefore the soldiers who prosecute that side are *not* morally equivalent to their opponents. Biggar rigorously critiques this account, while granting it flows from the ethical framework its advocates are bringing to bear on the issue. But that is itself the problem, as Biggar sees it: the older and deeper traditions of Christian just war, he asserts, provide the resources and show the wisdom of retaining the traditional account.

Biggar also challenges the complete adequacy of the current international system in capturing fully legitimate decisions to use military force in the first place. According to the legal framework of sovereign states, possessed of political sovereignty and territorial integrity, response to aggression is the “gold standard” justification for the use of force. At least since the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928, and certainly according to a close reading of the Charter of the United Nations, states may use force only when responding to aggression, when assisting another state responding to aggression, or when part of a collective security action authorized by the United Nations. Biggar uses the Kosovo conflict as one that clearly falls outside that normative legal framework and yet, he argues, was absolutely necessary as an ethical matter.

The book concludes with another hard case: the war in Iraq beginning in 2003. Against those who argue the war was justified on manufactured

and dishonest grounds and not worth the cost, Biggar once again provides a clearly argued case that the cost was justified. Whether readers come away persuaded or not, Biggar's argument will sharpen their thinking.

Biggar's is very much a theological book, and therefore mostly of interest to readers interested in a strong normative Christian argument. In that context, whether one is persuaded on every detail or not, it is a welcome tonic among the often shallow and sloppy thinking about war and the international system from some Christian circles. Yet there is value in the book even for readers who may not share the full theological view. It certainly brings a historical depth to the discussion that much contemporary philosophical just war thinking does not, detached as it is from the long historical tradition in the West Biggar represents, and attempting to grapple with the ethical problem of war with a comparatively small tool kit.

MARTIN L. COOK



Pattee, Phillip G. *At War in Distant Waters: British Colonial Defense in the Great War*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2013. 274pp. \$59.95

Phillip Pattee, a retired naval officer and professor at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, examines British efforts before the First World War to craft a global maritime strategy to deal with threats that were expected to arise during a war with Germany. In doing so, he makes a compelling case that British naval thinkers were not completely fixated on the German High Seas Fleet, nor were they unconscious of the critical need to keep the sea-lanes

of commerce and communication open for their merchant navy and England's national economy. Threats included the inevitability of impossibly high insurance rates during times of war, the combat capability of the overseas German East Asia squadron, and the possibility of persistent predations by German raiders. British leaders also understood that, despite the size of the Royal Navy, British assets would initially be stretched thin, as most British capital ships would be kept in home waters to respond to potential action by their German counterparts.

Pattee discusses British efforts to overcome these threats. His review of British involvement in insurance programs designed to keep merchant vessels in trade is fascinating and illuminates what must be one of the least known programs of the First World War. Strategies to deal with the German East Asia squadron, raiders, and shore-based supporting communication systems are better known, but Pattee still does them justice. Taken all together, *At War in Distant Waters* is a useful addition to a complete account of the First World War.

However, this book could have been much more. For starters, the title is misleading. Although the book chronicles actions taken in colonial waters, the depicted purpose is much more aimed at defending Britain, not its colonies. Nor does Pattee convincingly prove that Great Britain conquered German colonies to provide maritime security. Although some actions, such as the seizing or destruction of German high-frequency radio installations, were designed for this purpose, others, such as the conquest of German Southwest Africa, were not. Britain could have easily conducted limited operations and

denied naval basing and support from the German colonies. A major second African front, although sensible for other reasons, was not needed to protect seaborne trade. Additionally, the book is surprisingly dry, when it definitely did not need to be so. The eradication of German raiders from the world's oceans is a remarkable story, complete with drama, excitement, and extraordinary personalities. Spee's one-sided German victory at Coronel and his subsequent defeat at the Falklands were two of the major naval battles of the war, yet are given short shrift by Pattee. The tale of Count Felix von Luckner and his raider *Seeadler*, although occurring after the raider threat was greatly diminished, would provide a compelling illustration of the challenges in hunting down a gifted and tenacious raider captain. Pattee does relate the story of SMS *Königsberg*, but in such a brief manner as not to do justice to the very real concerns the cruiser created for the Admiralty, or the sheer magnitude of effort it took to destroy the warship. To compound matters, Pattee claims the destruction of *Königsberg* was carried out by two mortar-equipped barges. This is an error. To put *Königsberg* out of commission, the Admiralty dispatched the monitors HMS *Mersey* and HMS *Severn* on a long and hazardous journey to the Rufiji delta, where *Königsberg* was hiding, to sink it. For a book of this nature, this error is surprising.

While Pattee does include a description and evaluation of British operations in Mesopotamia—and ties these actions to the strategic importance of oil—the book is strangely silent on the Dardanelles campaign and the U-boat war. Perhaps this is because Pattee does not see the Mediterranean or Atlantic as “colonial” waters, or because neither Gallipoli

nor submarines figured sufficiently in prewar planning. Still, each of these challenges either demanded or resulted from evolving British strategies and both would seem worthy of inclusion.

Still, when all is said and done, Pattee has contributed to a deeper understanding of British—and German—maritime strategy in the First World War. By shifting focus away from the North Sea and the clashes between the Grand and High Seas Fleets, he has reminded the reader that British maritime leaders understood global vulnerabilities and planned to deal with them long before the guns of August opened fire.

RICHARD J. NORTON



Appelbaum, Peter C. *Loyal Sons: Jews in the German Army in the Great War*. London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2014. 347pp. \$79.95

Centennial commemoration and observance of the First World War have generated many books studying major and minor aspects of what was hoped would be the “war to end all wars,” or as H. G. Wells titled a 1914 book, *The War That Will End War*. It wasn't; instead, it was the first act of a century-long tragedy. The present volume provides a significant study of the more than 100,000 German-Jewish and 320,000 Austro-Hungarian Jewish soldiers serving during the war. One in eight was killed. First World War historian Jay Winter is correct when he writes in the volume's foreword, “we owe a debt to Peter Appelbaum for bringing to light the Jewish element in this tragic story.” The volume is groundbreaking in its scope and depth.

The volume consists of eight chapters and four appendixes. The first chapter

provides an overview of Jewish soldiers in the armies of the German states from the Prussian Wars of Liberation beginning in 1813 until the beginning of the First World War. The quest for respected and accepted service was part of the larger Jewish experience of nationalism and participation in German society and met with varied results. Although no Jew ever attended or graduated from the Prussian Military or Naval Academy, there were Jewish officers in the prewar Bavarian army and Austro-Hungarian army. The second chapter looks at mobilization and German-Jewish attitudes at the outbreak of the war. The outbreak of the war furthered German-Jewish patriotism. While there were dissenting, pacifist Jewish voices, they were largely ignored and overcome by Jewish organizations and individuals who published calls to volunteer. German-Jewish society responded at all levels and all ages. As the war progressed the initial zeal was replaced by calls for service based on duty (*Pflicht*) and honor (*Ehre*). German Jews entered service with hopes and confidence of no anti-Semitism. They were misguided. The third chapter studies in detail the experiences and opposing views of the war of two officers who served on the western front, Julius Marx and Herbert Sulzbach. This chapter and the fourth chapter, which looks at diaries and memoirs from the front, show the diversity of experiences and perspectives of religious and nonreligious Jews, all fighting with national loyalty, patriotism, and pride. The chapters also provide a good snapshot of ever-present Christian-Jewish sentiments. With respect to naval matters and the Kriegsmarine, there is little available information on Jewish sailors. By geography and profession, maritime life was not a significant part of the

experience of German Jews. However, Jews did serve in the Kriegsmarine aboard surface vessels and U-boats. The fourth chapter provides information on these activities, noting that the 1916 census of Jews in the military (*Juden-zählung*) registered 134 in maritime service. At least thirty were killed, some in the May 1916 battle of Jutland.

Chapter 5 studies the experiences of German Jews who served as physicians, physician assistants, and medical orderlies. It shows that Jewish participation spanned the strata of society and reminds readers of the pain and trauma of those who were wounded and dying. This chapter is enriched by the author's knowledge and experience from his first career of forty years as a physician, microbiologist, and professor of pathology. The sixth chapter moves to the air and looks at the approximately 250 Jews who served in airships and single-engine aircraft. Several pilots were killed, several became prisoners of war, and others—such as Fritz Beckhardt, who was credited with seventeen recognized kills—garnered fame and glory.

By 1916 there was rising anti-Semitism on the home front and rumors that Jewish service and sacrifice were not comparable to those of non-Jews. The seventh chapter recounts these rumors and perceptions and the solution of the landmark *Juden-zählung*. The final chapter provides an analysis, epilogue, and transition to the interwar years. In an attempt to counteract growing anti-Semitism during the postwar period German-Jewish veterans banded together in 1919 and formed the Reichsbund Jüdischer Frontsoldaten (Association of Jewish Front Veterans). One of the main activities was the publication of a monthly newspaper and other works

attempting to neutralize anti-Semitic agitation. All of this effort was shattered by the National Socialists after *Kristallnacht* (1938) and the anti-Semitism experienced during the First World War culminated in the anti-Semitic tragedies of the Second World War.

The present volume is Appelbaum's second book addressing the Jewish military experience of the era. The earlier work, *Loyalty Betrayed: Jewish Chaplains in the German Army during the First World War* (2013), received significant attention and acclaim and *Loyal Sons* is deserving of the same.

Appelbaum delves deeply into published and unpublished diaries, letters, and memoirs of those who served. For the first time, widespread personal and archival materials are gathered and analyzed in a single source. The work is meticulously researched, well written, and enjoyable to read. The author has produced a volume that bridges the chasm between studies for academic specialists and works for general readers. It is a welcome addition to the military history bookshelf that is lively, engaging, and thorough. The appendixes and numerous photographs are interesting and enhance the work. *Loyal Sons* deserves a wide readership and will not disappoint even the most casual reader.

TIMOTHY J. DEMY



Vaill, Amanda. *Hotel Florida: Truth, Love, and Death in the Spanish Civil War*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2014. 436pp. \$30

Spain was the only nation to take up arms against fascism in the years immediately preceding the outbreak of the Second World War. England, France,

and the United States did not act against this impending threat. While the Spanish Civil War began as an internal domestic matter between the newly elected Spanish Republic and reactionary Nationalist forces led by General Franco, the conflict would draw in Germany and Italy in support of Franco, and the Soviet Union in support of the Republic. The conflict pitted forces of Europe's far left and right against each other, eventually overshadowing the Spanish Republic's attempt to maintain power. Against this backdrop, Amanda Vaill follows the lives and fates of three couples. She weaves their lives and fates into the larger fate of Spain as Europe's only stand against fascism collapses under the weight of Franco's forces in early 1939. In doing so, she provides the reader with an overview of the political and military events of the Spanish Civil War, as well as minibiographies of six eyewitnesses to the war in an eminently readable and gripping account of the savage war that ended with the fall of Madrid.

Vaill's characters are presented in pairs. They are couples, romantically and professionally. The first to appear is the chief of the Spanish government's foreign press office in Madrid, Arturo Barea, and his future wife, Ilsa Kulcsar, an Austrian radical who has come to Spain after the war begins. Spain's tragic fate is most explicitly illustrated through Barea's slow descent from moderately prominent government official to ordinary refugee, finally settling in France with Ilsa. His observations on the Spain of his youth contrast with the savagery of the conflict between Republican and Nationalist forces that takes place throughout the book. Following Barea and Kulcsar, Vaill presents the Hungarian-born André Friedmann, who would come to be known as Robert Capa,

one of the greatest war photographers of all time. His relationship with the similarly gifted and prominent photographer Gerda Taro (Gerta Pohorylle) forms much of the central narrative of the book. Finally, American novelists, journalists, and war correspondents Ernest Hemingway and Martha Gellhorn are the third couple, rounding out the book's six main characters.

*Hotel Florida* is much more than just an account of the Spanish Civil War—or the story of the six main characters during those years. It is as much a story about the nature of truth and reality in wartime as it is a gripping narrative of the seminal conflict of the interwar years in Europe. Vaill's characters become who they are through their interaction with the war, and they create themselves—and the meaning of their own lives—as much as they create accounts of the war's events, whether through the written word or the photograph. Their stories and pictures are in many cases used for propaganda purposes, and the characters know this. However, the fine line between truth and propaganda largely disappears, if it is ever distinguishable in the first place. With the exception of Barea and Kulcsar, the characters want to be close to the fighting, to see the troops and the refugees and the destruction caused by the war, so that they can capture its meaning and portray the tragedy to the world, which does not seem to understand the importance of defeating fascism. A host of minor characters appear, many of whom are fighters in the various International Brigades (to include the famous Abraham Lincoln Battalion of American volunteers). These characters might as well have walked right out of a Hemingway novel—tough whiskey drinkers hunting fascists and eating trout and vegetables

cooked over a fire. In fact *Hotel Florida* itself reads like a novel, and it is no irony that the book concludes with the first sentence of *For Whom the Bell Tolls* as Hemingway begins to type the first page, transferring his Spanish experience into his greatest literary work.

This book offers something for not only the student of European history, military history, or literature. It is a first-rate account of the political and military events of the Spanish Civil War. It is also a deeply philosophical examination of the relationship among war, truth, and propaganda. It asks hard questions that are immediately relevant today even as the media landscape has changed dramatically; the fundamentals of human nature have remained such that any of the main characters of this book could sympathize with reporters, photographers, and journalists today. I highly recommend this brilliant book to scholars and general readers alike.

JEFFREY M. SHAW



Bayles, Martha. *Through a Screen Darkly: Popular Culture, Public Diplomacy, and America's Image Abroad*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 2014. 336pp. \$30

This is a wonderful, wonderful book. It is very much more than even its title and subtitle suggest. And it's a great read even though it deals with subjects and policy debates about which most of us would rather not think because they're either upsetting, or too complicated, or both.

The first half of the book is devoted to the image of America that our low (and getting lower all the time) popular culture projects worldwide. When



I embarked on reading it, I was intimidated by how much of our popular culture Martha Bayles proposed to cover in detail by focusing on (seemingly) so many individual products. I felt I already knew how vulgar and vile the movies and television shows we export are. When the author started in on *Sex in the City*, I thought, “Well, better her than me at least: somebody needs to know about this particular offense, but not me.”

Then, I discovered that Bayles very cleverly combined her assessment of how that television program gives a debased view of America with the reactions of interviewees abroad. Every example (and there is a myriad of them in chapters “The American Way of Sex,” “Empire of Special Effects,” “Television by the People, for the People?,” and “From Pop Idol to Vox Populi”) proceeds in this way. While she means us to look at and understand the attraction of and “push back” against American pop culture from place to place abroad, she provides excellent analyses of the indigenous pop culture and non-American influences. This takes one into society and politics as much as culture, religion, taste, and inevitable interesting peculiarities. The outcome is a nearly complete global vision of popular culture that I don’t believe can be found anywhere else. Of course, Bayles means to show the guiding influence of American pop culture.

In dealing with popular culture, Bayles is slyly operating in the way in which she will eventually commend that public (or culture) diplomats proceed. She holds that public diplomacy is made up of four activities: listening, advocacy, culture and exchange, and news reporting. These ought to be discrete from one another but given equal importance. Accordingly, a cultural officer ought to

be able to tell foreigners how Americans really regard *Sex in the City* (no one takes the show as real or expressive of his or her attitude toward life); be able to explain how certain things fit (or don’t fit) into the real American ethos (this is the advocacy part); know enough about the local culture to understand the “push back” that should always be sought; and, finally, tell the truth.

In addition to the foregoing, this book does several other things, and all of them excellently. Bayles is well versed in American political thought and history—enough to produce a fine essay on the American ethos that combines the historical, political, and cultural into what is really American. Again, this is an example of what every U.S. public diplomat should know and what those abroad might learn if public diplomacy were properly practiced.

The book is also a thorough history of U.S. public diplomacy, from the first master, Benjamin Franklin, through the shutting down of the U.S. Information Agency (USIA) in 1999, to the present. While she believes the abolition of the USIA was a mistake, the book does not advocate its revival. This is because Bayles is clearly more concerned with the content of government-provided information about America since the early 1950s (which is a distressing history) than she is about the institutions.

On top of it all, Bayles treats most related subjects—for example, the experiment in “strategic communications” as a kind of public diplomacy inflicted on the Department of Defense after 9/11 (and terminated by Admiral Michael Mullen, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in 2011); the history of the tight relationship between Hollywood and Washington that secured



the worldwide domination of American pop culture, while allowing its content to sink lower and lower; the troubled career of U.S. international broadcast; and the Internet and social media.

And yes, she deals also with the problem of U.S. promotion of democracy abroad. To quote from the last sentences of the book: "The premise of this book has been that a significant number, perhaps even a preponderance, of today's tiny battles are being fought not in the news media but in the mundane realm of popular culture. The wisdom of America is clear and straightforward: political liberty can be sustained only by self-governing individuals and prudently designed institutions. Yet when our fellow human beings look at America through the screen of our entertainment, what they see most darkly is a rejection of tradition, religion, family and every kind of institutional restraint, in favor of unseemly egotism and libertinism. Attracted and repulsed by this image, they might be forgiven for not appreciating the part about self-governance."

KENNETH D. M. JENSEN



Sander, Robert D. *Invasion of Laos, 1971: Lam Son 719*. Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 2014. 304pp. \$29.95

"The only chance we have is to initiate bold moves against the enemy," national security adviser Henry Kissinger confided in 1971. This was his advice to the administration of President Nixon, which sought to end the Vietnam War by creating "peace with honor." "Bold moves" would include two new strategies. One was resumed bombing of North Vietnam. The second would

be new ground raids into Cambodia and Laos to disrupt the Ho Chi Minh Trail—the network that allowed Hanoi to supply communist forces in the south, and that at its peak even included an oil pipeline from the Chinese border to the environs of Saigon. The raid into Laos, code-named LAM SON 719, is the subject of Robert Sander's recent book *Invasion of Laos, 1971*.

Despite the term "invasion" in the book's title, LAM SON 719 was designed as a cross-border raid on the town of Tchepone. It was here communist military supplies were shifted from trucks to porters, bicycles, and pack animals. The town had received attention from American military planners as early as the Kennedy administration. Sander quotes General Westmoreland explaining to General Abrams in March 1968, "I'd like to go to Tchepone, but I haven't got the tickets." Westmoreland's plans called for at least four divisions to undertake the assault. For its part, the government of Saigon had been planning an operation into Laos from at least 1965. In reality, as Sander notes, the United States had been conducting CIA and covert air operations in Laos since the 1950s.

President Nixon's policies of détente and outreach to China meant a reduction of the chance that expanding the war into "neutral" Laos would trigger Soviet or Chinese response.

Congressional restrictions designed to limit the war meant that American involvement in the 1971 operation would be confined to supporting roles in artillery and fire support. Yet, as Sander points out, this was still a bloody battle for the Americans. American casualties ran high, with over two hundred killed and at least 1,100 injured. Sander, who was a pilot during the battle, observes

that “U.S. Army helicopter crews endured incomparably higher losses during this two-month operation in heavily defended airspace than during any other period of the Vietnam War.”

The overall impact on the Ho Chi Minh Trail was limited but communist forces suffered at least thirteen thousand casualties, and the offensive blunted any North Vietnamese attempts to strike at withdrawing American forces. The withdrawal at the conclusion of the operation was memorialized by journalists who photographed Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) soldiers hanging on to the skids of returning American helicopters.

The operation’s overall dismal results were not due to a lack of ARVN bravery, Sander argues, but to poor operational planning and politics. Indeed, the ARVN suffered some 7,500 casualties out of the seventeen thousand soldiers committed to the operation. Rather, the ARVN battle plan for LAM SON 719 “was complex, far too complex for a corps commander and staff that had never conducted corps-sized operations.”

In Washington, the Army’s Vice Chief of Staff, General Bruce Palmer, remarked that “only a Patton or a MacArthur would have made such a daring move; an Eisenhower or a Bradley would not have attempted it.” Yet, at the start of 1971, South Vietnam had such an officer: General Tri, the daring corps commander who had led the successful Cambodia offensive. General Tri’s bravado extended to his trademark swagger stick and stylish sunglasses. Tragically, General Tri died in a helicopter crash en route to take command of the stalled Laos offensive.

Sander identified the operation’s relative failure as “the unintended consequences

of a decision to launch a major military operation involving corps from two nations that did not share a common objective.” While President Nixon “hoped to prevent the North Vietnamese from launching an offensive that could endanger, and even delay, withdrawal of American forces remaining in Vietnam,” South Vietnamese president Thiệu’s ultimate “objective was to give South Vietnam more time to prepare to meet the North Vietnamese without direct U.S. military assistance and without sacrificing his best divisions.”

American frustration during the operation was compounded by President Thiệu’s refusal to commit ARVN reserve forces to the battle. Sander suggests that many of these unused ARVN divisions were less than combat ready. Many were hampered by soldiers who spoke regional dialects and had strong ties to their local areas and could not be deployed far from home without fears of desertion. ARVN readiness was affected by another problem on which Sander does not dwell: “flower soldiers.” By the early 1970s, South Vietnam had as many as a hundred thousand “flower soldiers,” soldiers who paid commanders to continue civilian life as normal. In other instances the names of dead soldiers were kept on the muster rolls so their commanders could collect their salaries.

There are apparent parallels between LAM SON 719 and more recent events. It was revealed in November 2014 that the Iraqi Army had fifty thousand “ghost soldiers” who similarly did not exist. Likewise, where President Thiệu saw ARVN elite units first and foremost as a force to crush potential rivals, in Iraq, Prime Minister Maliki had similar views of using military force to suppress Sunni rivals. Thiệu was hesitant

about committing forces to LAM SON 719, and in 2014, when ISIS seized Fallujah, Maliki allowed the problem to fester. In neither case was suppression of a hostile insurgency put above the objective of maintaining a grip on power—much to the frustration of Washington. As Henry Kissinger would later say of LAM SON 719, it was an “operation [that was] conceived in ambivalence and assailed by skepticism, [and] proceeded in confusion.” Today what was then the town of Tchepone lies abandoned, though the lessons of 1971 remain fresh. Sander’s work will likely remain the definitive record of the Laos campaign until such time as archives in Hanoi are made fully available.

JOSEPH HAMMOND



Haddick, Robert. *Fire on the Water: China, America, and the Future of the Pacific*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2014. 288pp. \$37.95

Robert Haddick proposes a revised U.S. strategy toward China. He argues—agreeing with recent U.S. national security strategies—that continued U.S. forward presence is the only option that supports the American objectives of “an open international economic system; respect for universal values around the world; and a rules-based international order that promotes peace, security, and opportunity through stronger cooperation.” He articulates a two-front effort to ensure China rises within the existing international structure: positive reinforcement of good behavior combined with significant defense reforms to allow punishment of bad behavior.

Haddick discusses the nature of China’s military modernization and how it

bodes ill for the U.S. ability to punish Chinese transgressions against international order. He believes that current U.S. force posture is inadequate because U.S. air and naval capabilities are vulnerable to Chinese land-, air-, and sea-launched cruise missiles and ballistic missiles. And future U.S. capabilities—the F-35 in particular—have insufficient range to operate from existing bases under the antiaccess umbrella created by these weapons. To counter the tactical and operational challenges these weapons create he advocates the Pentagon develop a new long-range bomber and long-range cruise missiles able to penetrate Chinese airspace and hold critical targets at risk. He also promotes autonomous aerial projectiles based on a 1990s DARPA model to locate and destroy road-mobile missile launchers. He argues convincingly that his acquisition proposals solve the likely tactical and operational problems of a future war with China, but he does not engage with the highly contested literature on the strategic effectiveness of airpower. Without a theory of strategic effectiveness, he fails to make the case that these new capabilities would support his strategy and influence Chinese decision making during crisis or war.

Additional proposals are designed to threaten presumed Chinese fears. These include encouraging America’s regional allies to develop their own antiaccess capabilities on the First Island Chain, improving U.S. Navy blockading capacity, developing irregular warfare capacity among China’s minority populations, and developing antisatellite weaponry.

However, if China continues its policy of “salami slicing,” these weapons and plans will never see battle. By incrementally challenging the existing regional order,

China is, as Haddick agrees, achieving its objectives without risking war. Beijing understands there is a threshold for U.S. military response and will continue to operate below it. An American president would be loath to fire the first shots over the Chinese occupation of an uninhabited island. Haddick therefore argues the United States should develop policies to encourage China to follow the existing international rules in letter and spirit. Unfortunately, he does not detail these policies, leaving his strategy wanting.

Haddick states that strategy is about managing risk. While much of what Haddick proposes seems commonsensical, it is unfinished, and this poses risks. Focusing only on punitive measures against possible Chinese actions runs the risk of ignoring the ways China has played by the rules while furthering a mind-set where every development in the PLA's modernization is perceived as a threat to U.S. regional interests—regardless of Chinese intentions. This book should be read as part of an ongoing and equally unfinished debate on how to handle a rising China.

IAN T. SUNDSTROM



Hughes, Wayne P., ed. *The U.S. Naval Institute on Naval Tactics*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2015. 192pp. \$21.95

*The U.S. Naval Institute on Naval Tactics* is a collection of thirteen essays assembled by Captain Wayne Hughes, USN (Ret.)—author of several books, most notably *Fleet Tactics and Coastal Combat* and *Military Modeling for Decision Making*. Captain Hughes is also an accomplished naval officer, having served as commanding officer of USS

*Hummingbird* (MSC 192) and USS *Morton* (DD 948). Notable authors appearing in *On Tactics* include Admiral Woodward, RN, who commanded British forces in the Falklands War, and Giuseppe Fioravanzo, Admiral of the Fleet, Italian Navy. *On Tactics* is part of the U.S. Naval Institute's new Wheel Books series, which is a collection of books containing some of the Naval Institute's most well-regarded articles from *Proceedings*—and other sources—on such topics as naval leadership, command, strategy, and cooperation.

*On Tactics* is well worth the reader's time, and appropriate for both junior and senior officers. It benefits greatly from Hughes's insightful commentary and tactful editing, which boils the combined length of the selected essays down to a manageable 190 pages. Although the topic of tactics is broadly applicable to all naval communities, surface warfare officers will probably have the easiest time relating to the selected essays.

Of the thirteen essays in the volume, a favorite was "Missile Chess: A Parable," written by Hughes himself. "Missile Chess" describes a game created by Hughes in which players sit down to play a traditional game of chess but with a major twist: the players have a fixed number of "missiles" that they must distribute among their pieces as they see fit. The pieces still move according to the rules of regular chess, but each time they capture an opposing piece they expend one "missile." Once a piece's missile inventory is depleted a piece can still move but can no longer capture. After he walks us through several hypothetical scenarios, it is clear that despite its simplicity, missile chess nicely elucidates some of the most vexing operational challenges with which a modern naval commander must contend.

My only criticism of *On Tactics* is that some of the selected essays veer into areas that could more aptly be described as “strategy” or “enterprise management.” For example, “Toward a New Identity” chronicles Admiral Luce’s struggle to keep the Atlantic fleet together long enough to test the tactical doctrines flowing out of the recently founded Naval War College. Although this is a fine essay, it does not provide the reader with any particular insight into *tactics*. Rather, it provides insight into why new tactics can be difficult to develop. Similarly, “Creating ASW Killing Zones,” although an excellent piece on Cold War antisubmarine warfare operations and strategy, does not provide much in the way of *tactical* insights on how to defeat the submarine threat.

The great advantage of this book, and indeed the entire Wheel Books series, is that it makes many excellent articles and essays readily available to the reading public—essays that might otherwise have fallen by the wayside. Overall, this volume is an excellent addition to any personal library. The size of the book and length of the articles make it an excellent work for professional development, wardroom discussion, and thought-provoking conversation.

CHARLES H. LEWIS



Wachman, Alan M. *Why Taiwan? Geostrategic Rationales for China's Territorial Integrity*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford Univ. Press, 2007. 272pp. \$25.95

Tufts Fletcher School professor Alan Wachman was a giant in the China, East Asian studies, and international relations field who remains sorely missed

following his untimely death in 2012. In what is widely considered one of his major scholarly contributions, through this pithy, well-researched book—rightly considered a classic—Wachman engages in exceptional interdisciplinary analysis to offer provocative coverage of historical episodes that have shaped Taiwan’s status fundamentally. Some events raise penetrating questions about what might have resulted had they ended differently; other factors inspire critical questions about East Asia’s future. Wachman develops a theme of the strategic salience of “imagined geography” as the best explanation for the significant variation over time in the association of Taiwan as part of Chinese sovereign territory in the minds of the leaders, and even the populace, of mainland China. He does so through close examination of key Chinese documents and terminology as well as careful consideration of their relative authority and reliability.

Wachman suggests that Sun Yat-sen, Chiang Kai-shek, the Chinese Communist Party, Mao Zedong, and even possibly Deng Xiaoping did not initially consider Taiwan to be part of China in the sense that it is understood officially today. This approach raises compelling questions about state formation and national identity that are critical to the understanding of international relations. Indeed, it may be argued that “imagined geography” is a global phenomenon and hardly peculiar to China. It is important to remember that Taiwan was formally incorporated into Qing administration in 1683, nearly a century before the founding of the United States. One may contrast such historical events as the American acquisition and incorporation of Hawaii and Alaska and conclude that the factors Wachman considers do

not negate mainland China's sovereignty claim to Taiwan. Rather, it is primarily concerned for the maintenance of Taiwan's democracy and the freedoms of its citizens that continue to inspire Washington's involvement long after the Carter administration abrogated the United States–Republic of China Mutual Security Treaty in 1980.

While Wachman clearly documents Taiwan's strategic salience (real and perceived), other factors may be important as well. An alternative explanation might consider the challenge of Taiwan as a separate polity (e.g., democratic system). The vast majority of the other "lost territories" to which Wachman compares Taiwan have never been separate polities; the few that have been have not persisted for significant periods of time. Hence, political salience may be an appropriate variable. In fact, the challenge of Taiwan as a separate polity has emerged periodically throughout history (e.g., through Dutch occupation, Qing dynasty separatism under Ming loyalist Zheng Chenggong, Japanese imperialism, Nationalist rule, and today's multiparty democracy). China's imperial rulers initially viewed Taiwan as a remote, politically unorganized hinterland. Subsequently, however, as alternative political systems were imposed or developed on it with identities and objectives potentially at odds with those of Beijing, it periodically assumed heightened importance. This has geographic underpinnings in the sense that physical location rendered Taiwan susceptible to both influence and conquest by foreign maritime powers and later to technological acquisition, trade, and the attainment of per capita gross domestic product at levels that the vast majority of political scientists

agree are conducive to the development of a democratic political system.

But the Taiwan question has been, and remains to this day, a fundamentally political one. While Taiwan's geography has not changed, its political identity has varied tremendously. Since the end of the Cold War, U.S. support for Taiwan has arguably hinged on its rapidly liberalized political system, not its geostrategic significance. Taiwan is fundamentally useful in a geostrategic sense primarily for the basing of capabilities to facilitate its own defense. While some U.S. policy makers no doubt see geostrategic benefits to the island's present status even today, it is difficult to imagine Washington being willing to risk the expenditure of increasing amounts of blood and treasure if and when Taiwan's democratic system is no longer at stake. Should the day come when a majority of Taiwan's populace favors formal unification with the mainland—and this popular will is expressed through a transparent democratic process with no external coercion—it is inconceivable that Washington could actively oppose such a transition on geostrategic grounds. There is, however, the disturbing possibility that even if Washington's policy toward Taipei is not fundamentally geostrategic in motivation, policy advocated by elements of China's government (particularly the military) may be.

Wachman does acknowledge related complexities and the difficulty of finding conclusive evidence for his geostrategic explanation. However one may view these sensitive issues—which remain hotly contested—Wachman has made a valuable contribution on a critical issue whose complex history and enduring significance are forgotten at the peril of all in the Asia-Pacific. The complexities



Wachman introduces provide important considerations for the continuing debate over Taiwan's future. Those fortunate enough to have known Wachman personally know what a fine friend and

colleague he was; all can benefit from his intellectual legacy, of which this book is an important, enduring part.

ANDREW S. ERICKSON

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## OUR REVIEWERS

*Martin L. Cook* is the Admiral James Bond Stockdale Professor of Professional Military Ethics at the Naval War College. He received a PhD from the University of Chicago and taught at the United States Air Force Academy, the U.S. Army War College, and Santa Clara University, Calif. He is coeditor of the *Journal of Military Ethics*.

*Timothy J. Demy* is a graduate of, and professor of military ethics at, the Naval War College. He received a ThD from Dallas Theological Seminary and PhD from Salve Regina University. He is American managing editor of the *Journal of Military Ethics* and is coeditor of *Military Ethics and Emerging Technologies* (2014).

*Andrew S. Erickson* is Associate Professor in the Strategic Research Department at the Naval War College and member of the department's China Maritime Studies Institute. He received an MA and PhD from Princeton University and a BA from Amherst College. Among his publications are *Assessing China's Cruise Missile Ambitions* (2014) and *China in the Gulf of Aden* (2015).

*Joseph Hammond* is a freelance journalist who has reported from the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. He has written for a number of publications, including the *Diplomat*, the *Economist*, and the Atlantic Council's website. He has also worked as a consultant on international aid projects related to conflict issues.

*Joseph M. Hatfield* is an active-duty naval intelligence officer and received a PhD from the University of Cambridge. He is a recipient of the Rear Admiral Thomas A. Brooks Intelligence Junior Officer of the Year Award. He has published in *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, *Armed Forces Journal*, *Harvard National Security Review*, and the U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*. His dissertation focused on the ethics of war.

*Kenneth D. M. Jensen* was the first executive director of the American Committees on Foreign Relations as well as a founding staff member and officer at the United States Institute of Peace. He holds BA and PhD degrees in history (with Russian minors) from the University of Colorado and also did graduate work at the University of Wisconsin and Moscow State University (USSR). His fourteen published books include *The Emergence of Russian Foreign Policy*; *The Origins of the Cold War: The Novikov, Kennan and Roberts "Long Telegrams" of 1946*; and *Approaches to Peace: An Intellectual Map*. He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and the Committee on the Present Danger.

*Charles H. Lewis* is a surface warfare officer and graduate of the University of Washington. He served as electrical officer on USS *Milius* (DDG 69) and navigator on USS *Denver* (LPD 9). He is currently a surface navigation instructor at Surface Warfare Officers School Command in Newport, R.I., and is studying for a degree from the Naval War College.

*Christopher Nelson* is a career naval intelligence officer and graduate of the University of Tulsa and Naval War College. He is also a graduate of the Maritime Advanced Warfighting School in Newport, R.I. His most recent assignment was as the ship's intelligence officer on board the amphibious assault ship USS *Makin Island* (LHD 8), in San Diego, Calif.

*Richard J. Norton* is a professor of National Security Affairs at the Naval War College. He holds a doctorate in international relations from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy; he retired from the U.S. Navy in 1996, with the rank of commander. His most recent publications include "Through a Mirror Darkly: The Face of Future War, 1871–2005," *Naval War College Review*, and "Feral Cities," *Marine Corps University Journal*.

*Jeffrey M. Shaw* is Associate Professor, Strategy and Policy, College of Distance Education, Naval War College. He received a PhD from Salve Regina University and is the author of *Illusions of Freedom* (2014) and is coeditor of the forthcoming three-volume *War and Religion: An Encyclopedia of Faith and Conflict*.

*Ian T. Sundstrom* is the communications officer on board USS *Arleigh Burke* (DDG 51). He is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin and received an MA in war studies from King's College London.

*Arthur Waldron* has been the Lauder Professor of International Relations in the Department of History at the University of Pennsylvania since 1997. He received a PhD from Harvard University and taught previously at Princeton University and the Naval War College. He is the author of many articles and books, including *The Chinese* (2015).

## REFLECTIONS ON READING

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*Professor John E. Jackson of the Naval War College is the program manager for the Chief of Naval Operations Professional Reading Program.*

The 23rd of February, 1455, is widely recognized as the date when German inventor Johannes Gutenberg printed the first Western book produced using movable type. This is the date commemorated by Printed Book Day, an occasion that brings together authors, librarians, and bibliophiles to pay homage to the printed word. The Gutenberg Bibles printed over five and a half centuries ago are arguably the most famous books in human history. Only twenty-one complete copies exist today, each with an estimated value of between twenty-five and thirty million dollars. The invention of movable type transformed society as few other inventions have before or after, making books available to the general public rather than only individuals and institutions that could afford precious engraved or handwritten manuscripts. In the modern era, the number of books published by a country is often seen as a measure of the nation's standard of living and level of education. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization estimates that over two million new titles were published worldwide in 2013. In the United States alone over 304,000 new titles appeared. Reading is big business, even in a world often dominated by television, cinema, and other forms of the moving image.

One reason why many still have a fascination for books is the long-term bond engendered between a reader and a book's characters and events. This bond is formed in part by the amount of time a reader must dedicate to a book. Many social critics bemoan the fact that modern Americans, particularly younger citizens, seem to have developed very short attention spans. There is evidence to support this assertion. The average hour-long television program provides less than forty-three minutes of actual content, the remaining time being taken up by commercial messages. In this short period of time, situations must be described, characters introduced, and the issues brought to an acceptable conclusion. The length of the average motion picture is 120 minutes, longer than many television dramas yet still a severe time constraint.

By contrast, consider the investment of time and the commitment necessary to read a book. Reading speed depends on many variables, including the subject matter and the physical surroundings. But for purposes of discussion, it is interesting to note that at an average reading pace of two hundred words per minute, Harper Lee's classic *To Kill a Mockingbird* takes over eight uninterrupted hours to complete; Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* will demand your undivided attention for upward of forty-nine hours! As a final example, reading the 1.7 million words of the five books of George R. R. Martin's Song of Ice and Fire series (the basis for the immensely popular television series *Game of Thrones*) will take nearly 142 hours of focused effort.

Some might see these statistics as an indictment of the process of reading, but I see them in another light altogether. Reading a book is often an escape from the world around you. It enables you mentally to visit places and meet characters that you may never see in real life. Books offer detail and richness of description that can rival reality, and they are accessible to all. Books have often been described as doorways to other worlds, to other times, and to other perspectives on life. When you allow yourself to be captured by a book, the dozens, or scores, or hundreds of hours spent reading seem to fly past and often leave you wanting more. Press reports indicate that millions of readers are anxiously awaiting the next installment in the Ice and Fire series, still hungry even after a mental meal lasting about 142 hours.

The lesson then seems clear: if you really want to understand a subject or want to experience vicariously a different culture, career, or destination, reading a book is the way to achieve your objective. One final thought about the value of books comes from Harvard University's longest-serving president, Charles William Eliot, who once noted, "Books are the quietest and most constant of friends; they are the most accessible and wisest of counselors, and the most patient of teachers." Over the past eight years, the Chief of Naval Operations Professional Reading Program has purchased over a hundred thousand books and distributed them to ships, stations, and libraries throughout the fleet. We encourage you to seek out a book from one of these collections (or from a nearby public library or bookstore) and find in it a *friend*, *counselor*, or *teacher* of your own.